

GamerZines

ISSUE 14 | MARCH 2014

FirstLook

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ONE LAST LOOK AT THIS HUGE
FANTASY MMORPG BEFORE
SERVERS FINALLY OPEN UP!

The Elder Scrolls

ONLINE

The Elder Scrolls

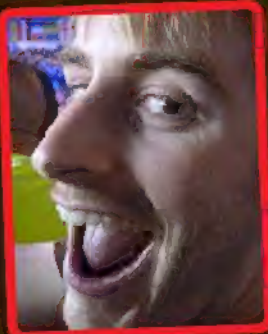
— O N L I N E —



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WELCOME TO FirstLook



MMOs, shooters, strategy games, adventures and surprisingly brilliant TV tie-ins star in this eclectic issue of FirstLook. The fourteenth issue of our magazine focuses on the best examples of the aforementioned genres you

can find. If you like questing with friends online we've got not only *The Elder Scrolls Online*, but also Carbine Studios' *Wildstar*. If you prefer shooting things in the face we have *Evolve*, *Wolfenstein* and *PvsZ: Garden Warfare*. If yearn to manipulate the electorate for your own means we have *Tropico 5*. And if you, for some stupid reason, feel prejudiced towards those with redhair we've got the unflinchingly faithful RPG *South Park: The Stick of Truth* to confuse and delight. If that wasn't enough inside this issue we also find time to investigate the thriving video game music scene to discover what makes a budding composer tick. All in all a bit of a unpredictable issue, but one that's compelling from page-to-page.

Enjoy the issue.

Andy Griffiths, Editor
FIRSTLOOK@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM

Still pondering
gaming's
illustrious future...

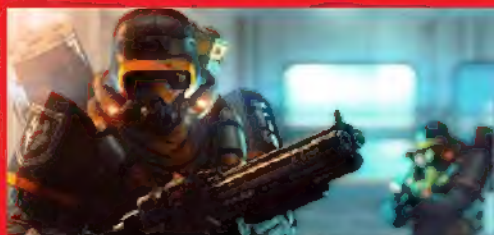


Roger Rodriguez
Loving his time in Tamriel.

Don't miss!
*This month's
top highlights!*



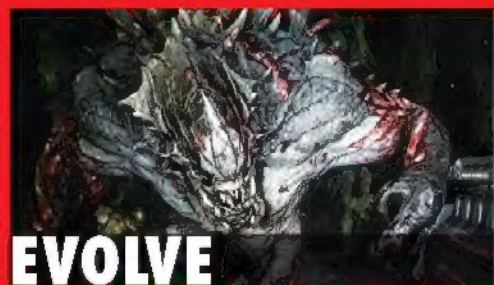
SOUTH PARK: THE STICK OF TRUTH



WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER



TROPICO 5



EVOLVE



QUICK FINDER



Batman:
Arkham Knight
Not A Game
Collection
Wolfenstein:
The New Order
Wildstar
Plants vs
Zombies:
Garden Warfare
South Park: The
Stick of Truth

Gods Will Be
Watching
The Elder Scrolls
Online
Tropico 5
Evolve
Warhammer
40K: Storm of
Vengeance
PreOrder Must
Haves
Video Round-up

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WILDSTAR



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NCS

FirstLook |



PREVIEW

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

PUB: WB GAMES
DEV: ROCKSTEADY
PLATFORM: PC,
XBOX ONE, PS4
ETA: 2014

TRA
OF
MO

YOUR BATMOBILE IS READY...

London's best games developer, Rocksteady, has been beaver away on a new *Batman: Arkham* game for the past two years and finally they are ready to share with the world what they've been working on. *Arkham Knight* will conclude the series' four-game arc and will see Bruce Wayne finally getting around to using that Batmobile he's so clumsily left around game environments and flung around in cut-scenes in previous games.

Player-controlled chase sequences aside, we really hope the Dark Knight's chariot of choice is given its due. Rather than just being a means of getting around the open world, Rocksteady could use it as a tool to construct puzzles

around. Other details about this release are thin on the ground, but the CGI trailer confirms that Two Face, Scarecrow, and Harley Quinn make an appearance in the sequel. The fact that this release is being tailored for modern-gen consoles also hints that the game world should prove bigger and more detailed than previous game renditions of Gotham.

There is a part of us that thinks putting Rocksteady on another Batman game is a bit stifling for a developer that is so talented, but seeing as this is the last *Batman: Arkham* game, perhaps they can move onto bigger and greater things after this series is through. What bigger and greater things you ask? Two words, Justice League. ■

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PREVIEW



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GODS WILL BE WATCHING

PUB: DEVOLVER DIGITAL
DEV: DECONSTRUCTTEAM
PLATFORM: PC
ETA: JUNE

AN ADVENTURE IN MORALITY

Okay, we're going to tell you exactly what we were told about *Gods Will Be Watching* before we knew anything about this indie gem. Ahem, "*Gods Will Be Watching* offers an experience which can only be described as a cross between *Star Trek* and that cannibal flick about a football team marooned on Brazil's Andes mountains, *Alive*. Now if that isn't a great pitch for a videogame we really don't know what is, and best of all in this retro adventure you decide who ends up on the barbecue. Neat, right?

To be more specific, the plot involves the exploits of a stranded team of scientists

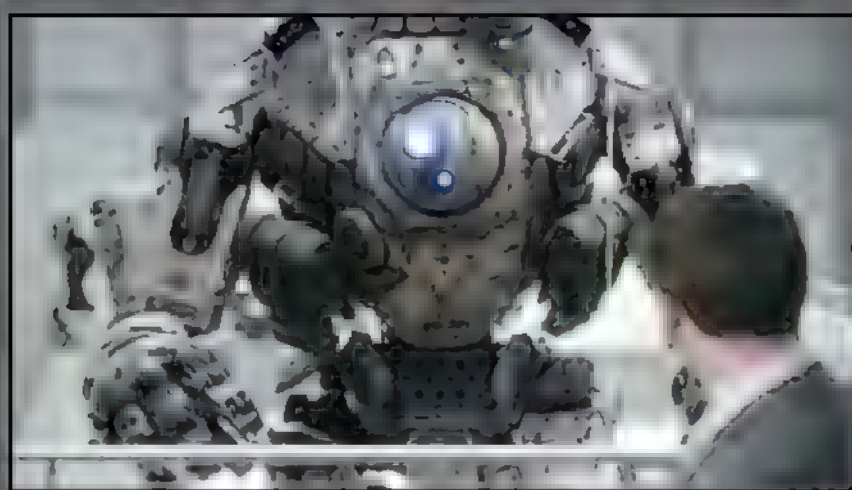
in 2257AD who are forced to survive in a hostile wintery environment after a terrorist attack sees them marooned for 40 days. Gameplay is all about exploring the tensions between survivors in this unusual environment, and quashing or encouraging them on the player's whim.

A slimmed down version of this release is already available to play right now, but a greatly expanded Kickstarter-funded edition is also in the works. If you want to be surprised by all the moral decisions in this game we recommend holding out for the full Steam and GOG version. Right then, who's for dinner? ■





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18
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MOMENTS

Titanfall

Something huge this way comes!

As an impartial games magazine, it isn't really proper for us to praise a marketing plan for any kind of game, but we'd like to put it in writing that Respawn Entertainment and EA have played a blinder when it comes to *Titanfall*. Neither party has overtly or cockily stated that their release comes from the studio that gave the world *Modern Warfare*, and they haven't resorted to bashing other multiplayer shooters

much like EA previously d'd with *Battlefield*. Instead, *Titanfall* has been promoted with poise and respectability at its centre, with gamers and journalists having ample opportunity to sample the mech-enhanced shooter on their own terms. Admittedly it does help that *Titanfall* is pretty good, shirking the need for any kind of smoke and mirrors, but still credit where credit is due. We can't wait to sit down and begin our *Titanfall* adventure.



PUB: Electronic Arts
DEV: Respawn Entertainment
PLAT: PC Xbox One PlayStation 4
ETA: 14th March

Diablo III: Reaper of Souls

PUB: Activision Blizzard
DEV: Blizzard
PLAT: PC (Consoles to follow)
ETA: 25th March



Blizzard finally released the loot 2.0 update for *Diablo III* this month and it was celebrated by players almost unanimously. Legendary drops are now much more common and

to help incentivise character development further, the XP rate earned from quests and kills has also been doubled until *Reaper of Souls* launch. Oh Blizzard, you know exactly how to spoil us.

MGS V: Ground Zeroes

PUB: Konami
DEV: From Software
PLAT: PS3 Xbox 360 Xbox One, PS4
ETA: 21st March

Konami are milking the *Metal Gear Solid* franchise for all its worth by splitting *MGS V* into two different games – *Ground Zeroes* and *Phantom Pain*. The first part of this sequel

is only two hours long, and sees players taking control of Big Boss as he seeks to liberate his friends from a PMC (Private Military Company). This is a glorified demo essentially.



Amazing Spider-Man 2



This might just be our love for Andrew Garfield and the brilliant villain Electro talking, but we have high hopes that this movie tie-in won't be terrible when

it hits consoles, handhelds and PC this summer. Beenox got web-slinging right in the last game and hopefully for the sequel they can get everything else spot on as well.

PUB: Activision

DEV: Beenox

PLAT: Anything that has a screen

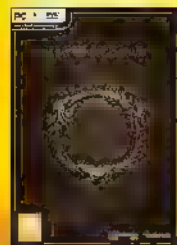
ETA: 2nd May

PUB: Bethesda
DEV: Zenimax Online Studios
PLAT: PC, PS4, Xbox One
ETA: 4th April (PC), June (Consoles)

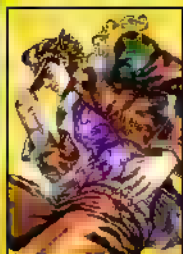
The Elder Scrolls Online

Every man, woman, child and their dog got access to *The Elder Scrolls Online* during the first weekend of March, as Bethesda sent out enough key-inbued emails to

blot out the sun. This in no small part has helped excitement for *TESO* to reach massive levels, and thankfully its release isn't too far off now. Last Argonian to Cyrodill is a rotten egg.



JoJo's Bizarre Adventure

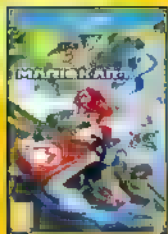


Against all odds, Namco Bandai has announced that CyberConnect's vibrant beat-'em-up, *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: All Star Battle* is indeed heading to European

shores. The PS3-exclusive dedicated to Hirohiko Araki's bizarre Japanese manga will arrive in April and we can't wait to get our violence-loving fingers on it!

PUB: Namco Bandai
DEV: Cyber Connect
PLAT: PS3
ETA: 25th April

Mario Kart 8



PUB: Nintendo
DEV: Nintendo
PLAT: Wii U
ETA: 30th May

The Wii U continues to be ignored in the high street in preference of more powerful consoles like the Xbox One and PlayStation 4, but *Mario Kart 8* could help Nintendo steal some sales away from their competitors. Boasting new zero-g tracks and other tricks, *Mario Kart 8* might just be the kind of system-seller the Wii U so sorely needs.

Infamous: Second Son



PUB: Sony
DEV: Sucker Punch Productions
PLAT: PS4
ETA: 21st March

Of all the exclusive franchises Sony has under its control, *Infamous* is probably the one that has yet to truly pull its weight. The first two games were okay, but they didn't make the most of their accidental superhero source material. *Second Son* should change that with its rebellious 'F*** The Man' storyline. Far out!

Microsoft



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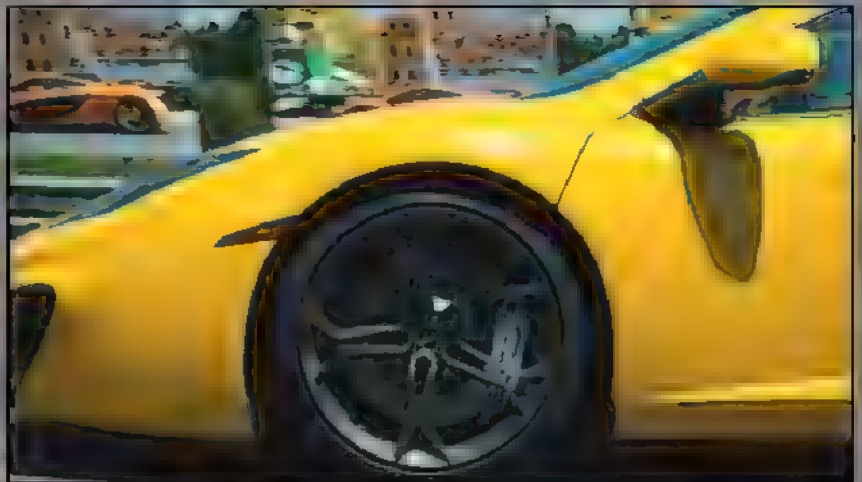
FORZA

MOTORSPORT

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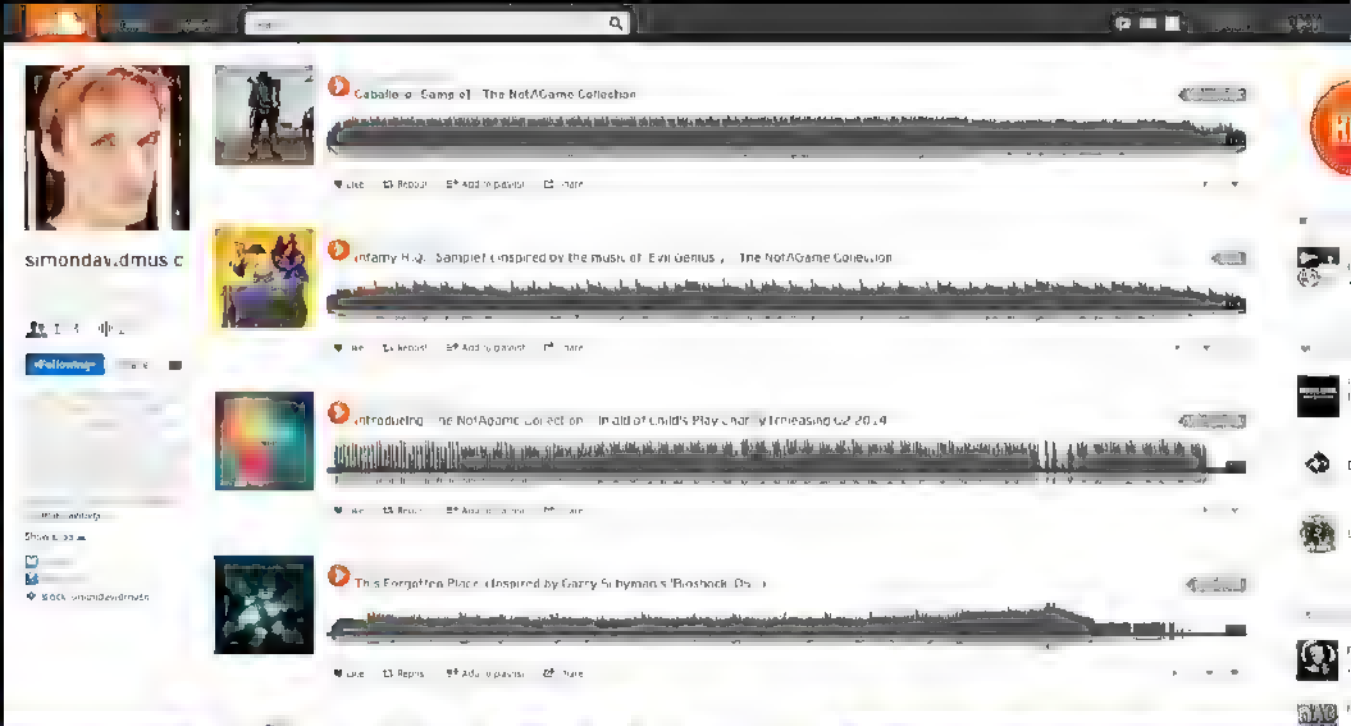
Forza Motorsport 5 is a cinematic automotive journey, starring the world's greatest cars and tracks. Built from the ground up to take advantage of Xbox One and the infinite power of the cloud, no game better delivers the wide-eyed thrill of racing.

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SIMON DAVID NOT A GAME COLLECTION INTERVIEW

BIO



Simon David is a full-time languages teacher who spends his spare time composing music based on existing videogame franchises, as well as utilising his own styles.

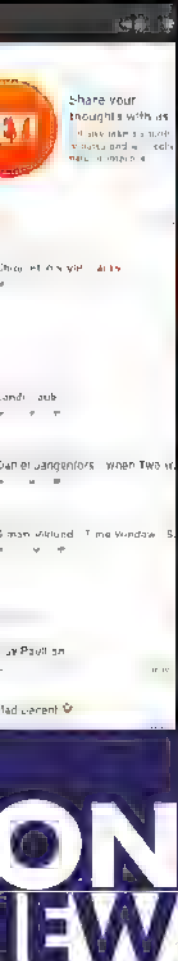
Journey into the mind of a budding videogame

Every month we think long and hard about who we want to talk to in *FirstLook's* coveted interview slot and in this issue we decided to give some extra attention to an aspiring videogame composer we've been following for a very long time. Simon David is currently putting the finishing touches to his debut album, *Not a Game Collection* which features tracks inspired from various titles, from indie hits to massive blockbusters. In this exclusive chat we delve into the reasons why this talented musician has used games as inspiration for his recent output and how he thinks videogame

music can evolve in the years ahead...

Great to hear from you again Simon. You've moved onto exciting things since doing that music blog for our lovely magazine at the end of last year. Why have you decided to put out an album inspired by existing videogame music?

To be honest, there are two main driving forces behind it: the first is my love of videogames music. As I wrote in the article you previously published, it's not a sector of the gaming industry that I feel gets nearly enough attention in the gaming or general



me soundtrack composer

press, and so I thought it was time that somebody produced something to celebrate the great work that goes on. Really it's my love-letter to my favourite composers and games, and I'm really hoping that it will rekindle some people's love of and interest in their own favourite videogame OSTs. Secondly, I've always composed music for as long as I can remember – I've been down the singer/songwriter route and felt ultimately pretty bored and uninspired. This album, however, has given me the chance to really challenge my songwriting, emulating different styles and themes of the music I love, which I

have found – and continue to find – genuinely really exciting and refreshing.

The album has quite an eclectic mix of tracks inspired by various OSTs, ranging from *Payday 2* to *Bastion* and even *Evil Genius*. What do you look for in a game when deciding whether or not to build a track off it?

This has actually been one of the harder parts of writing the album – finding games which have a unique enough musical style that they can be emulated. I really wanted people to be able to listen to any of the tracks and





The *Stick to the Plan* track is inspired by *Payday 2* and as you'd expect it sounds proper intimidating.

instantly hear their favourite games coming through, but that requires source material which is equally recognisable. All of the tracks on the album which reference a specific game (and even some that don't!) have been inspired by music which I feel fans would easily identify with and recognise, whether it's through the individual instruments, or the overall musical style.

For many of the tracks on the album you directly reference the game which inspired its style. Has there been any support from developers and publishers behind this? Would you like to mention a few developers that have been particular nice to you and those, ahem, that haven't?

This is a really interesting point, actually. Yes, I've had very different reactions to the project from various developers and publishers. Some of these have been unbelievably helpful and excited on my part, helping me to promote some of

the tracks for the benefit of their fans and giving me some really useful feedback and advice. Overkill Software (*Payday 2*) and Bossa Studios (*Surgeon Simulator 2013*) have been among some of the best, although by no means the only ones to help me out.

Some of the composers were also really supportive, like Darren Korb (*Bastion*), Disasterpeace (*FEZ*) and Ben Prunty (*FTL*).

Was everyone so helpful? Well, no! I actually wrote a (possibly slightly bitter) blog entry about this recently, called 'The Creeping Celebification of the Games Industry', which alludes to some of the issues I encountered when contacting some of the bigger companies. I won't name and shame here, but needless to say that I wasn't allowed to advertise every game which inspired some of the tracks on the album. Nevertheless, if I've achieved my goals, then hopefully they're easily identifiable anyway!

A finally poised score is one of the cheapest and quickest ways to give a game its own unique atmosphere and style. This is why indie developers in particular spend so much time searching out a unique sound for their game. *FTL* is a perfect example of a soundtrack enhancing what is otherwise a rather straightforward experience.

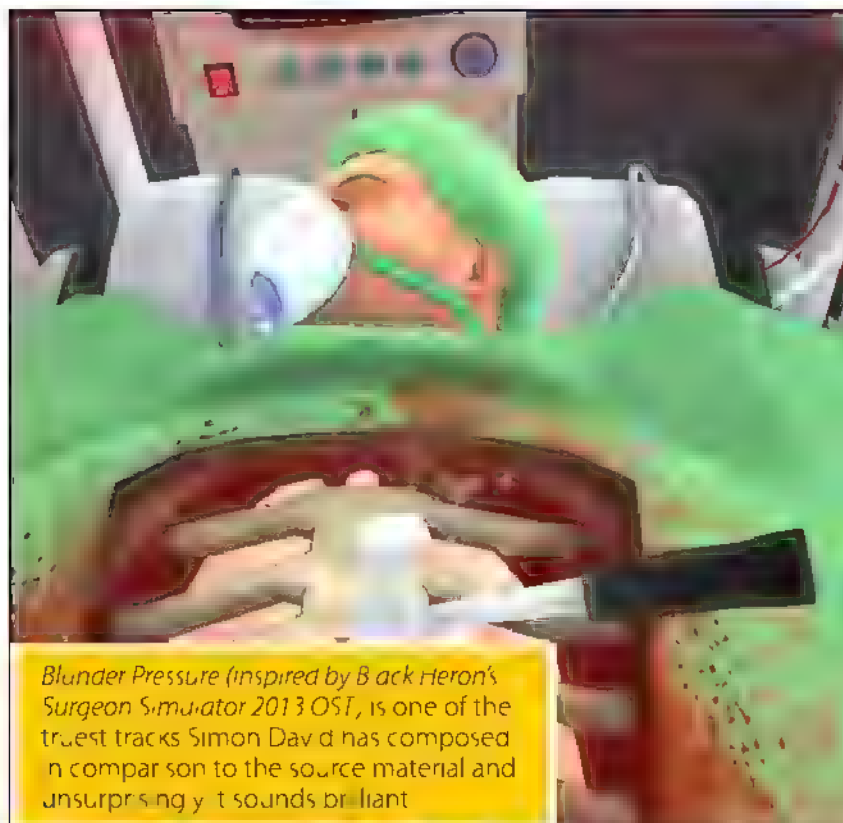


There are a number of different styles on the album, what setup do you have to produce all these tracks?

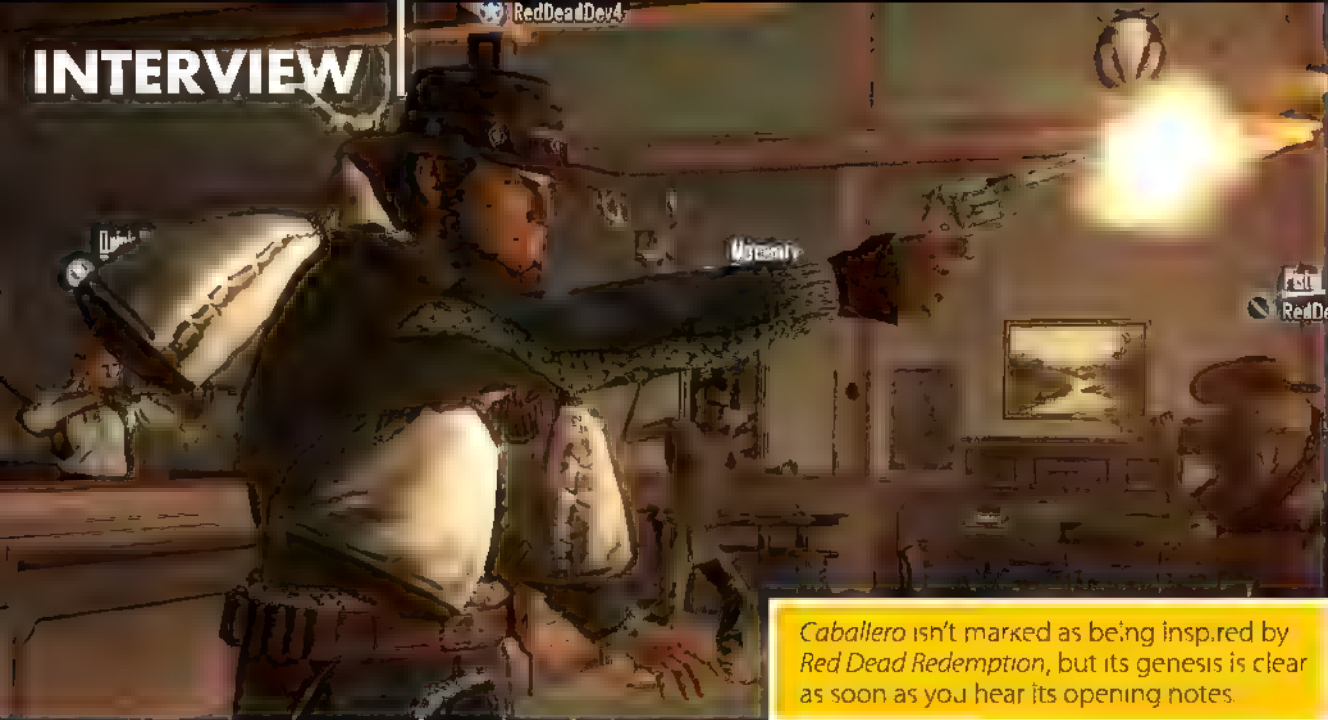
Oh, really nothing special. I compose on most of the same kit I've been using for years – a PC, *Cubase* (with a few VSTs) and a keyboard, which are set up in my study. The beauty of making videogame or film music nowadays is that there is so much which can be achieved without ever going near a microphone. Obviously this is sometimes needed when doing vocals etc., but the realism of even the most orchestral sounds is now so good (with the right software), that it's becoming functionally impossible to tell the difference. I'm sure that there are areas within the album where people will be able to hear the seams, but ultimately it's better than not doing it at all!

We love videogame music but we're absolute idiots when it comes to the production ➤

I've had very different reactions to the project from various developers and publishers



Blunder Pressure (inspired by *Back Heron's Surgeon Simulator 2013 OST*, is one of the truest tracks Simon David has composed in comparison to the source material and unsurprisingly it sounds brilliant



Caballero isn't marked as being inspired by Red Dead Redemption, but its genesis is clear as soon as you hear its opening notes

process. What advice would you give us if we woke up tomorrow morning and decided that we wanted to compose something?

I think the most important thing is to find something you're genuinely passionate about. If it's films, then write music for films, if it's chiptune, then you need to get yourself some retro synths! The composition and production of music like this is so enormously time consuming that if you don't have that passion to drive you, that's likely to come out in the mix. I think the only reason I've been able to find the time to write this album next to my day job is that I just can't get enough of it, and I really look forward to it when I've got free time – especially composing new songs.

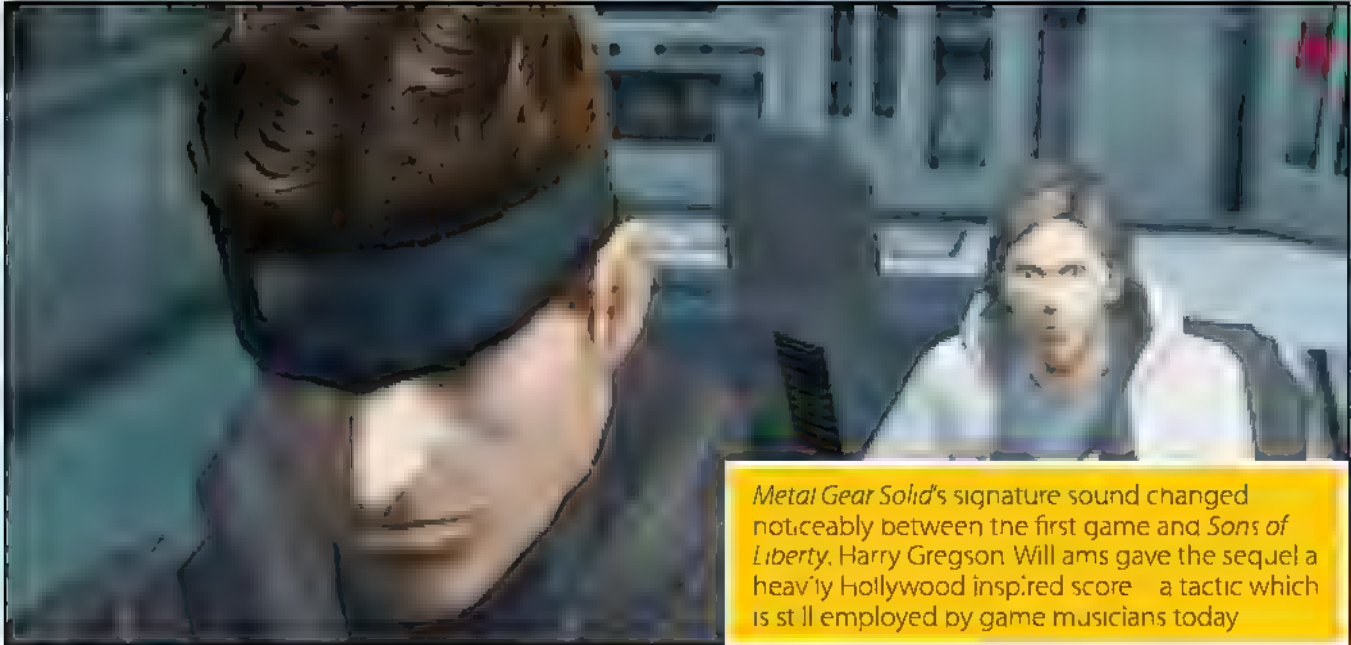
Do you think everyone has one good song in them?

I really do think everyone has one great song in them, regardless of

musical ability. The difficult part is getting this out and into a form that other people will enjoy too – that takes time, passion and a pinch of musical nous. So, perhaps everyone has one good song in them, but you can't necessarily get a good song out of everyone!

Half of the proceeds from the album will go directly to the celebrated charity Child's Play. Why did you choose them?

I really wanted to pick a charity that I believed in, first of all. I had a look into Child's Play right at the beginning, as I know it's a charity well supported by gamers, and was astonished by the sheer scale and scope of the good work they do. If you've never looked into their work but are among the millions of people who have donated to them, then you really should have a look at the things they're doing. From there, I didn't really look back. It's a great cause, and one that I



*Metal Gear Solid's signature sound changed noticeably between the first game and *Sons of Liberty*. Harry Gregson-Williams gave the sequel a heavily Hollywood inspired score – a tactic which is still employed by game musicians today*

know gamers will be happy to get behind.

What is your favourite game soundtrack of all time?

Some of the music that rouses me the most is from the *Metal Gear Solid* series, which played a massive part in my childhood and adolescence, so that would probably be my favourite of all time. That's not to say that there aren't others that I cling to, but those are probably some of the most important songs to me – especially the main theme, which might be my favourite orchestral score ever. That's precisely why I didn't include it on the album, too – I know I'd never surpass my own memories of that music, and wanted to leave it on that pedestal! If I had to pick a second it would probably be the music from *Ocarina of Time*.

Where should people go to check out the album, your samples and generally bug

“Some of the music that rouses me the most is from the Metal Gear Solid series”

you to put in a track inspired by their favourite game?

I'm pretty active on Twitter these days, so people can always follow and/or bug me @simondavidvgm – that's probably the best way to keep in touch. I've also got a blog site that people can subscribe to at: simondavidvgm.wordpress.com. As for the album, it will hopefully be going up in around a month at simondavidvgm.bandcamp.com, but until that happens, you can check out my Soundcloud page which has some of the tracks (albeit in their low-quality, unpolished forms) at www.soundcloud.com/simondavidmusic. ■

If you've composed any music you'd like us to listen to, send us a tweet @GamerZines.

PREVIEW

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS MMORPG



PUB: BETHESDA
DEV: ZENIMAX
ONLINE STUDIOS
LAST GAME: N/A
PLATFORM: PC (XBOX ONE)
PLAYSTATION 4
ETA: 4TH APRIL (PC-ONLY),
JUNE (CONSOLES)

Because preparation is half the battle...

The release of 2014's first and arguably biggest MMORPG is just around the corner, and rather than offer up another hands-on preview about Zenimax Online Studios' subscription-based debut we decided to offer up a detailed overview of everything that *Elder Scrolls Online* has to offer.

Unsurprisingly there's a lot to go through here – ranging from unique skill advancement to world design and competitive PvP, but all that will be explored in the following pages in an easy

to grasp and straightforward manner, so come release day you won't be unsure about what makes this trip to Tamriel different from previous ones.

The Elder Scrolls Online is the sixth game set in the aforementioned continent and at launch it'll have been in development for seven years, so we don't expect this release will be short on depth or content.

Here's everything you need to know about this fascinating MMORPG...

FirstLook | Preview

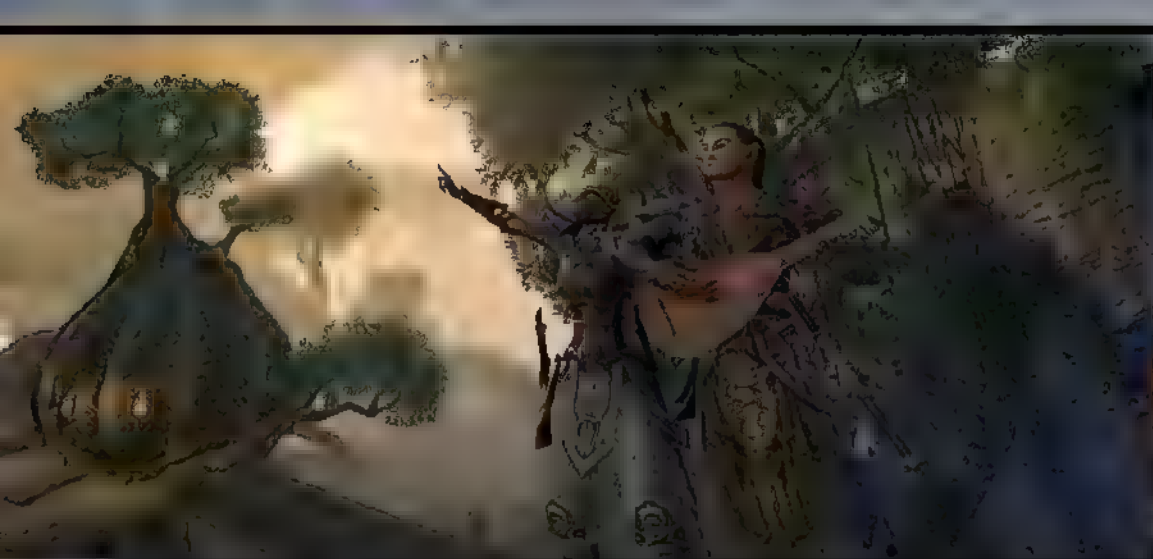


A MERGING OF IDENTITIES

Merging the typical quest-orientated *Elder Scrolls* gameplay with all the functionality of an MMORPG has undoubtedly been the greatest challenge of this entity's development and we'll be honest, we didn't think Zenimax Online Studios could pull it off. That's why way back in June last year we asked Producer Matt Firor whether *EESO* would be more of an *Elder Scrolls* game than an MMO and his answer was as follows: "We want both [single-player and multiplayer] groups to feel very happy in the game, but when you sit down and play it you'll think it's an *Elder Scrolls* game first. If you played the PC versions of *Oblivion* and *Skyrim* this is the same control system. Same mouse-driven combat, as you have a reticule in the middle of the screen – you aim you don't tab lock. Obviously the more you play it, the more multiplayer stuff kind of comes in, but when there's choices to be made regarding player impact on the world, we go the *Elder Scrolls* route not the MMO route."

Undoubtedly some sacrifices have been made in transferring *Elder Scrolls* design into the MMORPG mould, with not everything in the world being able to be interacted with. There's also a slight feeling of lag in the immediacy and impact of combat in comparison to single-player entries in this series, and there's the ever-present problem of a player character being described as "special" by NPCs, despite the fact that players can easily spot fellow adventurers doing the exact same quest as they are. Frankly though, these sacrifices are perfectly acceptable now that Tamriel can be explored with friends in tow. Established *Elder Scrolls* tropes associated with character levelling, dialogue-laden lore, story-driven questing and the capacity to explore on a whim are all here. This is still the same *Elder Scrolls* that you know, only with adding multiplayer functionality and lots more!





HOW BIG IS ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE?

The *Elder Scrolls II: Daggerfall* is widely regarded as the biggest open-world game to date, boasting a game map measuring 62,394 square miles – that's roughly five times the size of Wales! *Elder Scrolls Online's* open-world isn't quite as large as that, but the MMORPG does boast every important region that featured in *Daggerfall* including Summerset Isles, Hammerfell, High Rock, Skyrim, Morrowind, Cyrodiil, Valenwood, Elsyeewn and Black Marsh. All of these regions boast their own culture, architecture, indigenous flora and fauna, prejudices and politics.

When you first create your character your starter province is dictated by which faction you choose – Aldmeri Dominion, Daggerfall Covenant or Ebonheart Pact – but from there you are free to go wherever you wish. Players can travel around the landmass quickly by riding around on a horse or utilising fast travel portals sprinkled liberally around the land. Here's a list of all the confirmed locations available to explore in *TESO* at launch, so see if any of them ring a bell:

- | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| - Alik'r Desert | - Deshaan | - Reaper's March |
| - Auridon | - Eastmarch | - Rivenspire |
| - Bal Foyen | - Glenumbra | - Shadowfen |
| - Bangkorai | - Grahtwood | - Stonefalls |
| - Betnikh | - Greenshade | - Stormhaven |
| - Blackrock Isle | - Khenarthi's Roost | - Stros M'Kai |
| - Coldharbour | - Malabal Tor | - Tamriel |
| - Cyrodiil | - Mundus | - The Rift |

To give you an idea of size, the region of Cyrodiil alone requires at least 30 minutes walking time to traverse, and that doesn't take into account time battling creatures faced along the way. So yes indeed, this open-world boasts a truly massive space to explore. Better ready your stead traveller.

A LORE-TASTIC ADVENTURE

In lore terms, *The Elder Scrolls Online* shares a lot in common with *Star Wars: The Old Republic*, as just like in BioWare's MMORPG there's plenty of opportunities to discuss the state of the world with most characters you meet, and quests are usually punctuated with fully-voiced discussions about the impact of the player's activities on the world.

The plot, set a thousand years before the events of *TESV: Skyrim*, kicks off for every player in the same way, with their undead form escaping from the Oblivion realm controlled by a terrible demon known as Molag Bol. This unsavoury fellow is attempting to take over the whole of Tamriel by literally pulling the realm into his plane of existence via massive magical anchors, and it's up to the player, along with a bunch of celebrity-voiced NPC allies (including *Spider-Man 2*'s Doc Ock/Alfred Molina and *Harry Potter*'s Dumbledore Michael Gambon) to take them out.

While questing there is ample opportunity to change the very nature of the world via moral decisions, the consequences of which are usually communicated by phasing, and of course there's the usual array of books, letters and other written material scattered around to further immerse people in the world they're investing their time in. To get an idea of the kind of high-quality storytelling we're alluding to, watch the exclusive video across the page.

Sir Walter's Journal

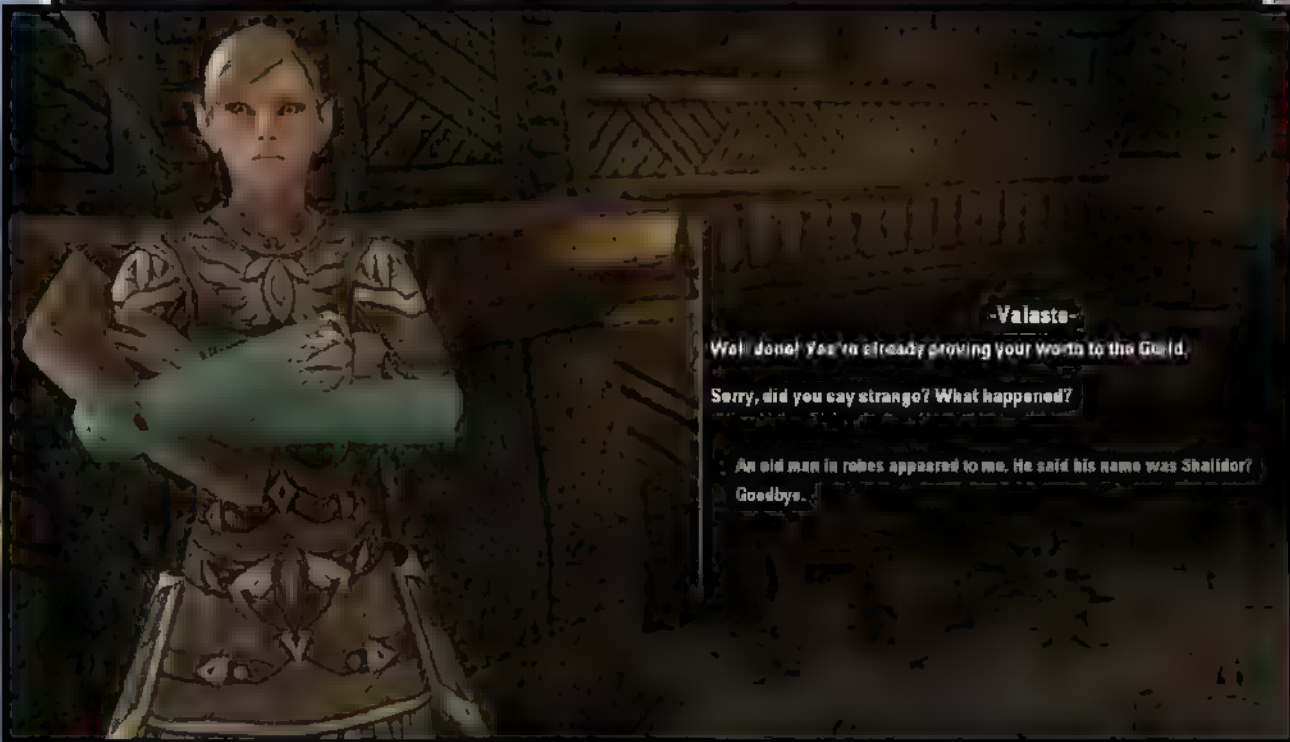
Can't put it all away. Nothing right. We
were in bed when... perhaps maybe down
into the basement of my homeland... as much
as in the air beside of... on the
top of... In that fashion we come to
know the... in the... to
... in the... of the... the
... the...

Spillies and... have a good idea of the
the... Always... really... of
... out... behind the
... in... up... in...
... the... with... the... to
... the... We're making good time,
and going when we must... the... the...

... and... but then they
... to... well... they
... a... the...
... the...
... the...
... the...
... the...

It's been years since... from...
... of... the...
... that day... what... to my
... what... and...
... would... in the... night... hoping
... it would... my... way.

... the day... made my... back the...
... the... to... at... the... the...
... it will be my... can't... myself to
... longer.



-Valaste-

Well done! You're already proving your worth to the Guild.

Sorry, did you say strange? What happened?

An old man in robes appeared to me. He said his name was Shalidor.
Goodbye.

THE LEVELLING EXPERIENCE

Elder Scrolls Online doesn't handle levelling in a typical MMO fashion. Instead progression follows the series-established principle of only levelling skills a player uses. For instance, if you role out as an Argonian Nightblade, essentially a Rogue archetype, and decide after a couple of levels you don't like using a dagger mixed with stealth abilities, you can easily switch to a different role, say a staff-wielding Mage or a ranged Bowman, and unlock abilities in that skillpath instead.

XP accumulation is still a mixture of exploring the world, taking down enemies and completing activities, but those who experiment with skills outside of their class will notice that they level up faster. There is a risk with this system that players won't have level-appropriate abilities as they pick and choose between ranking up different skills, race-based traits and faction abilities but there are multiple options to respect before the level 50 limit is reached.

Areas in the world aren't level-gated either, but the level of mobs faced in new areas can prohibit travel if your character isn't of a sufficient ability to survive. Quests are also level-appropriate, with the journal highlighting the ideal character level for completion, which in turn hints at potential XP yield. As one would expect, the world is full of main quests, side-quests and instanced dungeons, so if for whatever reason a player can't complete their chosen activity, they can easily pick up new quests in local towns, boost their level and thus progress on. Of course, teaming up with others for help is an option as well.



OPEN-WORLD PVP

An, open-world PVP. Those words will either fill you with excitement or dread at the prospect of getting harassed and slain repeatedly by a fellow griefer. Thankfully *Elder Scrolls Online's* PVP component is faction-based and takes place entirely in the disputed realm of Cyrodill. This area is not only massive, as we mentioned earlier, but it's also full of dozens and dozens of keeps, castles and other support structures that teams of players can claim for their Alliance (Daggerfall Covenant, Ebonheart Pact or Aldmeri Dominion) which they choose when they first create their character. Taking these keeps is not only a case of defeating the faction that surrounds them, but players will also need to utilise battering rams, ballistas and trebuchets to literally break down fortress walls and penetrate the inner keep. Destroying support lines to keeps is also a means of starving the enemy out, and this battle is constantly going on as an aside to the usual questing and story-based gameplay. Those who control the most keeps, control Cyrodill and the most effective player from the controlling alliance gets to become Emperor for a short time, earning themselves special skills and bonuses as part of the privilege.

Zenimax are promising battles which involve hundreds of players at a time in Cyrodill with this area's architecture designed to cope with the extra player stress of all these fighters coming together and knocking the snot out of each other.

This portion of *TESO* unlocks at level 10 with character level boosted to 50 as soon as he or she steps foot in Cyrodill. Some players will undoubtedly stick with the main quest and level their character to cap before messing with PVP, while others will jump in head first as soon as they're able.



Oh YES, THAT SUBSCRIPTION FEE

The biggest stumbling block for *Elder Scrolls Online* won't likely be any of its gameplay failings, as the most prohibitive aspect of the release is its subscription fee. After purchasing the game for PC, Xbox One or PlayStation 4, players get 30 days worth of access for their initial investment, but after that they need to pay a fee of €12.99/£8.99/\$14.99 every 30 days in order to maintain access to the servers. For some that proposition will be too costly, but Bethesda has already said players can cancel their subscriptions at any time if money suddenly becomes tight, and that characters will be stored indefinitely, just in case lapsed subscribers return.

The publisher is allowing hundreds of thousands of gamers to find out for themselves if *TESO* is for them by sending out free access keys to weekend events. This demo initiative is the perfect means to figure out whether the full-priced product is worth your time without spending a penny.

Another benefit of subscription versus free-to-play MMORPGs is that players are much less likely to be bombarded by prompts to use real cash to buy in-game items in subscription games and the loot economy isn't tarnished by weapons and armour that can be bought for real money, requiring no effort. Of course, *TESO*'s Imperial Edition goes against that idea a tad, by walling off access to the Imperial race unless players snap up this aforementioned collector's edition, but then there are nine races to choose from. Zenimax will have to pump out meaningful content on a regular basis to negate the temptation of players cancelling their subscription, but from what we've already played of this MMORPG, there's a fair amount of content for players to sink their teeth into already – certainly enough for all but the most hardcore of players to be kept busy months after launch.

We have no idea how *TESO* will fair at or after launch, but we do know that this release has all the elements to challenge the biggest of its MMORPG rivals. If nothing else, this game will offer a fascinating journey for all involved. Will you be a part of it? ■



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WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

EXCLUS
HANDS

Three hours with MachineGames' Reboot



Step into hell

MachineGames' reinvention of *Wolfenstein* is the most inventive and emotionally charged first-person shooter we've played since Valve unleashed *Half-Life 2* way back in 2004. Now we're well aware of just how hyperbolic that statement appears when written plainly on a page, but honestly that's how we feel after playing the first three hours of this dramatic reboot.

The reasons behind this overwhelmingly positive opinion come down to three

important feats which the Swedish developer has managed to carry off with aplomb. Firstly, they've managed to humanise *Wolfenstein*'s returning protagonist B.J. Blazkowicz by imbuing the US Marine with the sass of *Die Hard*'s John McClane, mixed with the relaxed self-assuredness of *Sin City*'s Marv, making him both likeable and easy to root for. Secondly, they've layered multiple systems on top of the typical run-and-gun shooting action this series is known for, offering players real

PUB: MachineGames
DEV: MachineGames
LAST GAME: Wolfenstein: The New Order
PLATFORM: PC, PS4, Xbox One
ETA: TBA



**EXCLUSIVE
S-ON**

and meaningful choice about how they engage the Nazi threat in vast, multi-laned levels. And

*"The most
inventive and
emotionally charged
first-person shooter
we've played since
Valve unleashed
Half-Life 2"*

thirdly, and potentially most impressively, they've somehow

managed to wrap their alternate history take on World War Two – with Nazi Germany boasting tech ripped from the future – in an atmosphere that feels genuine, honest and unsettlingly real.

Now if you looked at the screenshot on this page while reading that last sentence you might have said to yourself, "Real? Pull the other one Mr Games Mag! It's got bloomin' mechs in it!" And honestly we wouldn't blame you if did, but for all *New Order's* cyborg German Shepards, Nazi mecha and laser-shooting

B.J.'s survival doesn't just rely on his own tenacity to stay alive: he has a whole team of resistance fighters backing him up.

stealth fighters, the plot regularly comes back to human details, adding flavour to this bleak version of the past. Now that doesn't change the fact that the principle means of player interaction in this world is still shooting things in the face, but MachineGames have carefully inserted plenty of incidental details about the characters and the overpowered Nazi threat to make you feel compelled to restore the balance in the Allies' favour. This is seen not only in the places you'd expect like cut-scenes, set-pieces and dialogue, but also in otherwise easy-to-overlook material like unlockable bios which explore the history of characters and their motivations.

Let us give you an example in somewhat spoilerific fashion. Take that fella you see B.J. Blazkowicz take a chainsaw to in the recently released Boom Boom trailer. His back story is much darker and

more detailed than any chainsaw fodder necessarily needs to be.

Chainsaw Chappy

Prior to his grisly death, B.J. witnesses the one-eyed Officer Keller order the destruction of dozens of mental health patients over a long stretch of time. He's clearly a man who's done unspeakable things and does, some might say, deserve the violent fate that awaits him, and this is something the player feels while stalking this particular Nazi.

During the set-piece shown in the trailer, B.J. is in the process of interrogating the officer to learn where the Nazis are holding imprisoned resistance fighters, but rather than just showing this in a cut-scene, players are placed in full control. In fact, their objective during this uncomfortable scene in a basement involves searching out eye and body protection located in draws and shelving

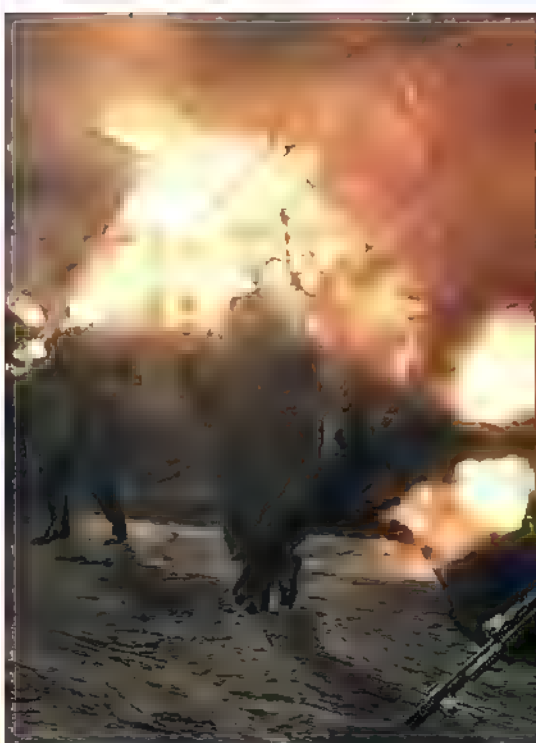


units around the prisoner, in order to protect against any unwanted blood splatter when combining the officer's fleshy form with that of the chainsaw.

While the player is looking in draws and wall fixtures for the required goggles and apron, the

"There is a cover system in play in The New Order as well, but while playing on PC we rarely, if ever, used it"

tyed up prisoner is exclaiming how hopeless the fight against the Nazi war machine is and how his friends are going to bust through the door at any moment and condemn B.J.'s allies to a painful death. There is no choice here about whether the player spares ➤



or doesn't spare the despicable yet restrained prisoner, and the cut-scene depicting Keller's final moments does fade away before the viscera hits the screen. Importantly, after this scene an on-screen prompt pops up indicating that a new character bio is available to view via the in-game menu. This particular entry gives a history of the recently slain Officer Keller, explaining that he was a member of the Hitler Youth, and how his family was sent to a concentration camp never to return during his formative years — essentially hinting to the player that Keller was as much a product of this new sadistic world, as much as he was generally a bad egg.

We won't give away any other story details than that, and in truth Keller is a minor character in the overall scheme of the plot, but this example is representative of just how dark



Some elements of *The New Order* are genuinely revolutionary, other points not so much. Turret sequences certainly belong in the latter camp.



MachineGames are willing to go with the source material and how their supplemental plot touches enrich the game ten-fold. Some players will just take part in that scene gleefully giving the Nazi officer his due, but others will read every morsel of story detail MachineGames are willing to offer

"Understandably we chose the former, which inevitably doomed the inhabitants of the latter"

and come to the conclusion that this version of Europe is an utterly depressing place indeed.

There were plenty of other moments which hammered home the brutality of this alternate

past during our three hours with *New Order*, including the now infamous E3 demo involving the player being interrogated by Frau Engel with her boy toy Bubi.

Making a Scene

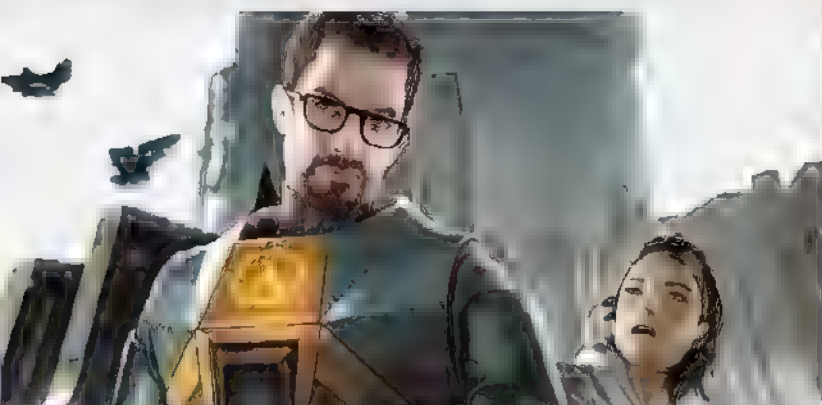
In our view, the consistently brave and brilliant narrative direction MachineGames has employed in this new breed of *Wolfenstein* is by far the most interesting thing about the game. Their cut-scene direction at times too is genuinely astounding, echoing the quality achieved by Naughty Dog in terms of cinematic storytelling. However in raw gameplay terms this shooter is impressive as well.

During our three hour playthrough there were plenty of regular first-person shooter tropes like turret sequences, wall-climbing and bouts of trench corridor shooting, but slowly and surely more elaborate >



Comparing **Half-Life 2** with **Wolfenstein: The New Order**

Your jaw may have swung open like a drawbridge when we mentioned *Half-Life 2* in the same sentence as *Wolfenstein*, but the two shooters actually boast a lot of similarities. For starters, both games star antagonistic factions guilty of genocide, and both games cast the player as part of a resistance which lacks the superior tech of its enemy. B.J. Blazkowicz has a team of support staff behind him who regularly chat in his ear, much like the scenario which *Half-Life 2*'s Gordon Freeman finds himself in. Level design is similar too, with both games relying on gun-orientated puzzles to slow the action down. Both titles even have a love story at their centre, with *New Order*'s proving a bit more obvious in its intent. *New Order* is different in a few ways, such as B.J. proving anything but a silent protagonist, but the inspiration behind this reimagining of *Wolfenstein* is certainly easy to pinpoint.



mechanics were introduced. For example in the first level, which involved assaulting a beachhead in a manner that wasn't entirely unlike D-Day, players are told to enter a bunker via one singular point. Follow this objective to the letter and you'll find yourself using explosives on a door earmarked as an obvious entry point. However, if you circle past the objective and carry on to another completely unmarked room containing some haphazardly stored Nazi warheads, it is possible to explode the missiles and thus flank the platoon full of soldiers waiting patiently behind the door associated with the original objective.

The consequences of these choices are minimal really, as they still lead to lots of dead enemies and the same cut-scene to run at the end of the mission, but these environments do offer some scope for players to express themselves, and that's to be encouraged. Another moment



involved us running away from a massive skyscraper-sized Nazi mech – the sort of which would make Skynet turn green with envy. Again players have the option of ignoring this bot or use an aggressively procured AA gun to end the robot's lightning-fuelled tyranny.

Other levels featured classic *Wolfenstein* callouts as well, such as giant portraits sliding to the left when interacted with, revealing secret officer quarters and the familiar eating food to regain health trope. Fans of id's franchise will also be pleased to hear that there's still the potential to boost your health over 100 as well, if only for a short time.

Guns ranged from the predictable assault rifle to giant laser mini-guns which melted away any metallic cover enemies were unfortunate enough to be hiding behind, and yes it

is possible to dual wield most weapons, although long-range accuracy is sacrificed a little bit. There is a cover system in play in *New Order* as well, but while playing the game on PC we rarely

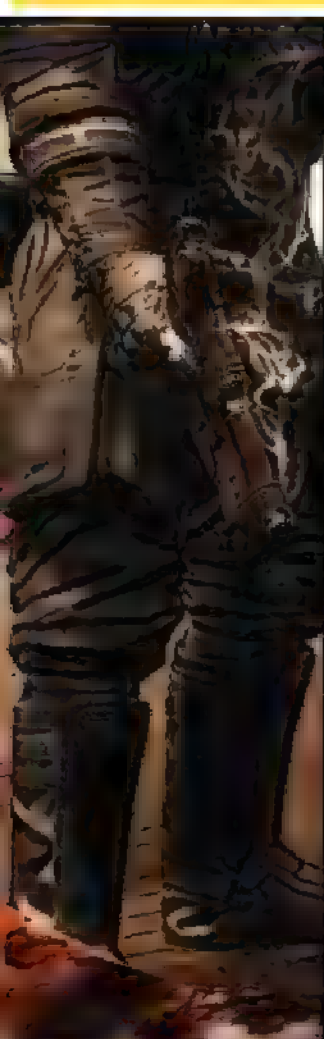
"Keller is clearly a man who's done unspeakable things and does, some might say, deserve the violent fate that awaits him"

if ever used it. The lean toggle, that is tied to the ALT key, was all we ever needed.

As our playthrough progressed, we noticed levels got substantially larger and the traversal options available to us became much more varied.



We aren't entirely sure what the insignia is adorning these soldiers' uniforms, but we have a suspicion that it's a shot from the German build of *Wolfenstein*, which doesn't feature any Nazi insignias whatsoever.



The missions that followed Officer Keller's demise involved B.J. moving through multiple heavily fortified security checkpoints which players have the option of infiltrating and neutralising in any fashion they wish, as long as they kill everyone inside and open up a mission-critical gate.

At this point we were free to either go loud and alert everyone in the base or go in silently and take people out via a neck-cracking melee attack from behind or silenced pistol. This is when we started messing around with *Wolfenstein's* Commander system, which is tied to several high-ranking officers located on any given map. Essentially this mechanic encourages stealth play, minimising the enemy reinforcements players have to face. When we first came across this area three prompts appeared at the top of the screen showing

the proximity of our location to a nearby commander. The story reasoning behind this mechanic is that the player always has a radio to hand and that he or she can automatically scan frequencies to determine the position of high-

"We stalked the three commanders for about ten minutes, carefully avoiding patrol patterns by grunts"

ranking officers, who happen to be the only personnel on the field who can tell high command that the area is under attack. We'll excuse the silliness of this concept as it's clear that Nazis in this alternate version of history aren't shy of advanced tech (robot dogs

General Deathshead's brutality becomes apparent at a really early point in the campaign, but his name gives it away to be honest



anyone?), but as a game mechanic it works well.

We stalked the three commanders for about ten minutes, carefully avoiding patrol patterns by grunts. Eventually we took the commanders out one by one, eliminating the chance of them calling in reinforcements and we felt pleased with our sneaky performance. Impressively there weren't any game loads between these three massive checkpoint areas, which in truth functioned more like mini-bases than meagre checkpoints – boasting massive steel doors, lifts and sniper towers.

Further expanding this kind of player choice, every environment in *Wolfenstein: The New Order* also boasts hidden enigma codes, letters, gold pieces, health upgrades, maps and secret

weapons to incentivise tackling levels multiple times.

Just like our preview from October stated, MachineGames' debut is shaping up to be something very special, and our latest experience with the reboot hasn't swayed that opinion one iota. *New Order's* rendition of a Nazi-run world in the 1960s is most easily described as Hell on Earth, and if you're anything like us, you'll relish the chance to restore history to its true path with every snapped neck and every carefully placed bullet. 

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PREVIEW



WILDSTAR

EXCLUSIVE
SCREENSHOTS

UNDERSTANDING ADVENTURES

Five-person instances with a difference.

Player choice isn't something *Wildstar* is lacking. Between classes, paths, crafting, dungeons and warplots, it would be fair to say that options associated with character levelling aren't quite as limited as they tend to be in other MMORPGs. This past month Carbine Studios added yet another component to that already varied list, something they call Adventures. These five-man branching instances unlock at level 15, and allow the team behind *Wildstar* to experiment

with mechanics and story details that otherwise planet Nexus, the alien world in which the game is set, wouldn't be able to accommodate.

At launch there will be six adventures in total, with more being added post-release, and we got to sample just one of them titled 'Riot In The Vold'. This mission lasted around 30 minutes with our team comprising of journalists and Community Managers and it was one of the richer quest experiences we've had with *Wildstar* so far. Using the



PUB: ESOX
DEV: CARBINE STUDIOS
LAST GAME: 11/11
PLATFORM: PC
ETA: 1/15

FirstLook | Preview



SIVE
ENS

group finder we chose a role, set the difficulty level and found our character automatically inserted in

"Experiment with mechanics and story details that otherwise planet Nexus wouldn't be able to accommodate"

our Skype chatting team, within seconds of pressing the 'Find Group' button.

Once banded together we all spoke with Caretaker, the NPC who controls the handy-dandy Transimulator, and upon choosing our mission the AI construct instantly transported us away from the safety of a massive Dominion ship into a simulated world after a short load. At first the world was tinged by a *Matrix*-inspired overlay which mapped the geometry of everything on screen, but after a few seconds that effect dissipated to reveal a battle-charred asteroid, with us playing the roles of prison



PREVIEW

Secure the Astrovoid (39)

Which problem would you like to tackle?

Arms Race

Many of the guards' weapons were left unsecured throughout the main complex. If they're not disposed of quickly, the prisoners will gain the upper hand.

Felony Geology

Some of the prisoners have entered Rackbreaker Mine and are trying to crack open the tool sheds. The mining equipment down there could be used as powerful weapons.

Prisoner Release
The prisoners are a mix of good and bad. Some are just looking for a better life, while others are looking for a way to escape. The prisoners are a mix of good and bad. Some are just looking for a better life, while others are looking for a way to escape. The prisoners are a mix of good and bad. Some are just looking for a better life, while others are looking for a way to escape.

At multiple times during any given adventure, the team has an opportunity to vote on what path they'd like to pursue next.



guards in a complex known as the Astrovoid, attempting to put down an inmate insurrection.

After quickly moving between several highlighted safe zones to avoid sniper fire from weapon-stealing prisoners, we aimed for a star mark on the mini-map which led us inside the prison complex to speak with Warden Rhadman, who offered us four different options to bring the facility back under his control. These ranged from harvesting weapon racks before prisoners could get their grubby hands on them to freeing guards destined for the meat grinder unless we got to them first.

We ignored both of those options and instead went for another branch which involved descending down into the facility's underground mine to secure equipment which could also be used as impromptu weaponry by pesky Exile prisoners. Achieving this objective



simply involved dispatching trash mobs and opening up chest-like containers, which were only secured if the right colour sequence was inputted in as part of a Simon Says-inspired mini-game.

After we accomplished that surprisingly easy feat, we hot-trotted it back to the Warden (Mr Rhadman to you) to select another objective from a choice of four. This time we elected to rewire some pesky artillery cannons, again 'aggressively procured' by Exile forces, which involved yet another set of Simon Says-inspired mini-games. None of these objectives were particularly tricky, but the combat was still engaging with our DPS-spec medic simultaneously drawing attack energy from enemies and dishing it back out – allowing our team's tank to swing away unabated.

Our third and final choice again involved four selections, with our team of five vowing to choose a last-minute dash to the asteroid's landing pad in an effort to intercept prisoners before they escaped the Astrovoid, via a dropship destined for planet Nexus' fertile soil. Needless to say we got there before they could do that, narrowly avoiding gun fire from more captured turrets, ending the instance with a boss battle involving a hyperactive Granok warrior armed with rotating arm blades, fevered movement and the kind of elaborate ground telegraphs that would make Transport for London jealous.

Our level 35 characters blew through this instance without really breaking a sweat, despite our characters being apparently level matched to meet the content. Nevertheless we still



PUB: 2K GAMES
DEV: TURTLE ROCK STUDIOS
LAST GAME: LEFT 4 DEAD 2
PLATFORM: PC, PS3, XBOX 360
PLAYSTATION 4
TBA: BETWEEN JULY AND SEPTEMBER 2014

TWITTER



@EvolveGame
Art Mines, Personal Shield, An Assault Rifle and a Lightning Gun.
[iguzynzylid](https://twitter.com/iguzynzylid)



@Imaculatus Jedi
This evolve game looks crazy, definitely gonna scoop that when it drops



@CGGoldby
I saw @Imaculatus Jedi signed @EvolveGame & I was like, "One of the most intense combat experiences we've seen!"



@GAMERZINES
We got to check out Evolve Verdict? "One of the most intense combat experiences we've seen!"

TWEET US @GAMERZINES

The Hunters become the Hunted

In terms of multiplayer phenomenons, *Left 4 Dead* is right up there with *Call of Duty*, *Team Fortress 2* and *Counter-Strike*. So when somebody tells you you're about to sample the next big multiplayer evolution from the studio that worked with Valve to produce the aforementioned zombie-genocide sim, you stand up and pay attention.

We were in that envious position last month as we sat down with two random journalists and one of the few Producers behind *Evolve* to see what this unique 4 vs 1 shooter experience was all about.

Like *Left 4 Dead*, the premise behind *Evolve* is delightfully simple: you, as part of a four-person team, have to take out another player who has shirked aside his vulnerable human form to become a gigantic, slowly evolving monster. It's the Tank versus Survivors principle from *Left 4 Dead* essentially, only expanded out to accommodate different character classes, monsters, an alien planet named Shear and Turtle Rock Studios' familiar brand of chaotic yet strategic violence.

Essentially the studio has taken that 4 vs 1 skirmish and expanded it out to last an entire 30-minute match, with one single monster spawning into a densely populated environment full of flora and fauna a dozen or so seconds before the hunters, forcing the human team to track the beast before being able to take it out.

These preliminary tracking moments in matches might sound dull, but we found them incredibly intense with our squad communicating constantly with each other as tracking cues hit the screen, with birds being suddenly startled, or telltale footprints belonging to the monster appearing in the soil in front of us.

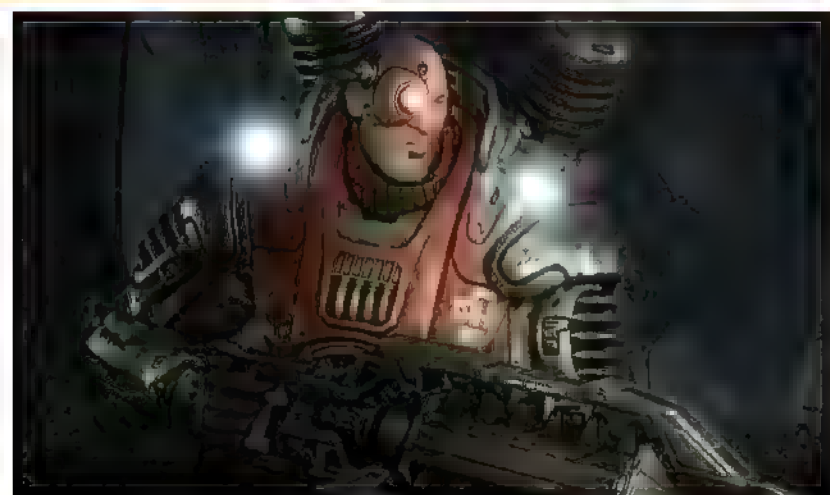


"Like Left 4 Dead, the
premise behind Evolve is
delightfully simple"

PREVIEW



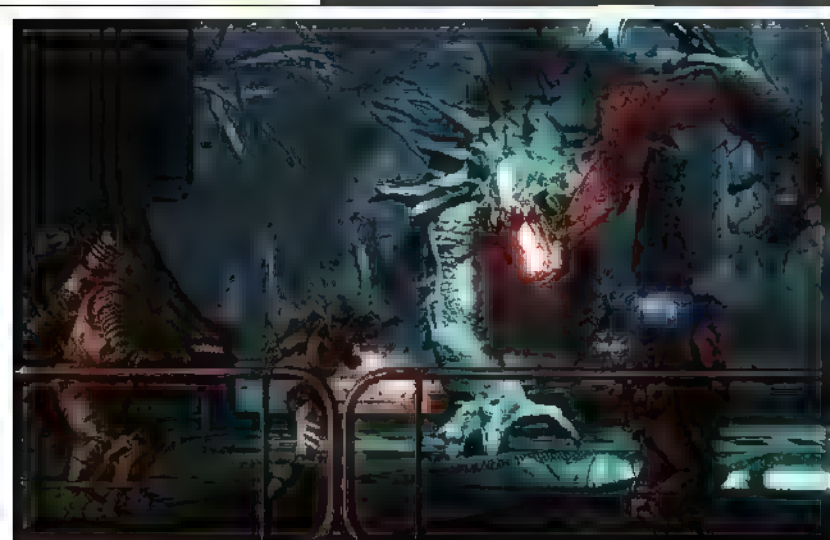
If you're this close to a fully evolved Goliath then it's probably best to stop shooting and just run!



While this organised or disorganised effort, depending on your team, is going on, the player embodying the monster has to skulk away, being careful not to be seen while at the same time feasting on lower-class AI monsters in the food chain in order to fill up an evolve meter which then grants him or her new strengths and abilities.

At any point in this struggle the human team can take the monster down, but if the scaly one manages to evolve into its final form, the next objective kicks in bringing the battle between the two evenly sided factions (at that point) to the forefront.

There are plenty of details that brief synopsis overlooks like the different abilities associated with every class and the sheer scale of the densely populated jungle area belonging to the level we sampled, but the simplicity inherent in *Evolve's* design is undoubtedly part of



Evolves gameplay balance means that working as a team isn't just an option, it's absolutely vital



its appeal. There's no need for glossy cinematics or any kind of introduction, instead gameplay falls under the easily grasped conceit of 'You're a human, go kill that thing' or 'There's a smelly human, go kill that thing'.

Where the depth comes in is that each of the four player classes boast individual roles and abilities again summarised as Support, Healer, Assault and Trapper. For instance, the Trapper named Griffin can essentially put the monster on a leash with his harpoon gun, and the laser rope only shatters when the monster lands a successful attack on him, and he also has the ability to call down a massive dome shield trapping the monster in one place. Oh, and he can also track the monster's movements by placing down radar nodes which ping whenever the monster stumbles close to one.

The other classes have handy tracking skills too, including the Healer's ability to shoot out tracking darts, whereas the Support class Hank can become

HUNTER CLASSES

- Hank, Support Class
(Laser support, Shield Project, Orbital Barrage)
- Val, Medic
(Medgun, Sniper Rifle, Tranquilizer Gun, Instant Revive)
- Markov, Assault
(Personal Shield, Auxiliary Mines, Assault Rifle and Lightning Rifle)
- Griffin, Trapper
(Sound Spikes, Mobile Arena, Harpoon Gun, Light Machine Gun)

Hank is a prime example of Turtle Rock adding neat little character details to their classes. Players may not notice the finer ones at first, but after a few plays they will appreciate them.



GOLIATH ABILITIES

- Charge Attack
- Rock Throw
- Fire Breath
- Massive Leap
- Heavily Armoured Pooper

invisible for short times. These complimentary abilities have been designed to encourage close knit team play, and like in Turtle Rock's previous franchise, if a single player is downed during a playthrough it's very hard for a team to come back and win the scenario.

Each member of the team also has a handy jetpack to vault over any obstacles they come across or retreat from would-be attackers, but running off and tackling the monster, even in its early stage of evolution when it's only 12' or so feet tall, isn't wise. Neither is engaging the 30-foot variety when the beast is fully evolved, but then at least you have your squaddies to back you up.

There's a really interesting cat and mouse dynamic at play during the early part of matches which then gives way to siege-like battle scenarios where the monster attempts to get to an objective while the human team must defend it.





Now this is a better battle formation, cue lots of shooting and running around in a madcap fashion. All we need is some *Benny Hill* music.

During our brief hands-on we had one chance to play as a Goliath monster variant, and controlling this massive beast gave us an immense feeling of empowerment, as our giant form dwarfed the humans around us. They scurried around like ants once we were fully evolved, yet protecting a vulnerable generator from our fist-based wrath they still could chip away at our health while retreating away. Splitting up and isolating team members like the Medic was the best way to victory we were told, but we had a tough time nailing down one target as they all constantly strafed around our feet. One time we did land on a Medic, flinging her into the air away from her group and that proved immensely satisfying. Yet while we were focusing our efforts on the health-granter, the Assault soldier was laying mines and the Support player was tagging and activating soft points to fire at on our hulking form, while the Trapper brought

down a massive shield eliminating our ability to jump away from battle and recharge our health in a manner the Hulk would have been proud of. Being part of this beautiful chaos was a real joy, and it's a perfect example of what makes *Evolve* such an enticing prospect.

The final game will feature multiple monster variants, more environments, a character progression model for human classes (offering up more weapons and abilities to play with) and no doubt more game modes riffing on the 4 vs 1 gameplay formula. Turtle Rock Studios has stumbled onto yet another winning multiplayer formula and it'll prove very interesting to see how they expand upon this potential online phenomenon over the coming months. We're definitely interested in seeing the finished result. ■



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TROPICO 5

PREVIEW



PUB: KALYPSO MEDIA
DEV: HAEMIMONT GAMES
LAST GAME: OMERTA
CITY OF GANGSTERS
PLATFORM: PC,

TBA: 30TH MAY (PC), JUNE
(XBOX 360)

TWITTER



@El_Prez

We're proud to reveal that there will be a closed Beta test for Tropico 5. Sign up now! & you'll have a link for more info! <http://ow.ly/u77wK>



@Gamemaker

Kalypso focusing on Tropico 5 for Xbox 360, Xbox One Version to be considered <http://is.gd/R3IMqC>



@KalypsoMediaUK

What do you all think of the #Tropico5 gameplay trailer then? Is it positively tyrannical? #trailer #pc #xbox360 #ps4



@LeeKitty

Why can't Tropico 5 come out tomorrow?

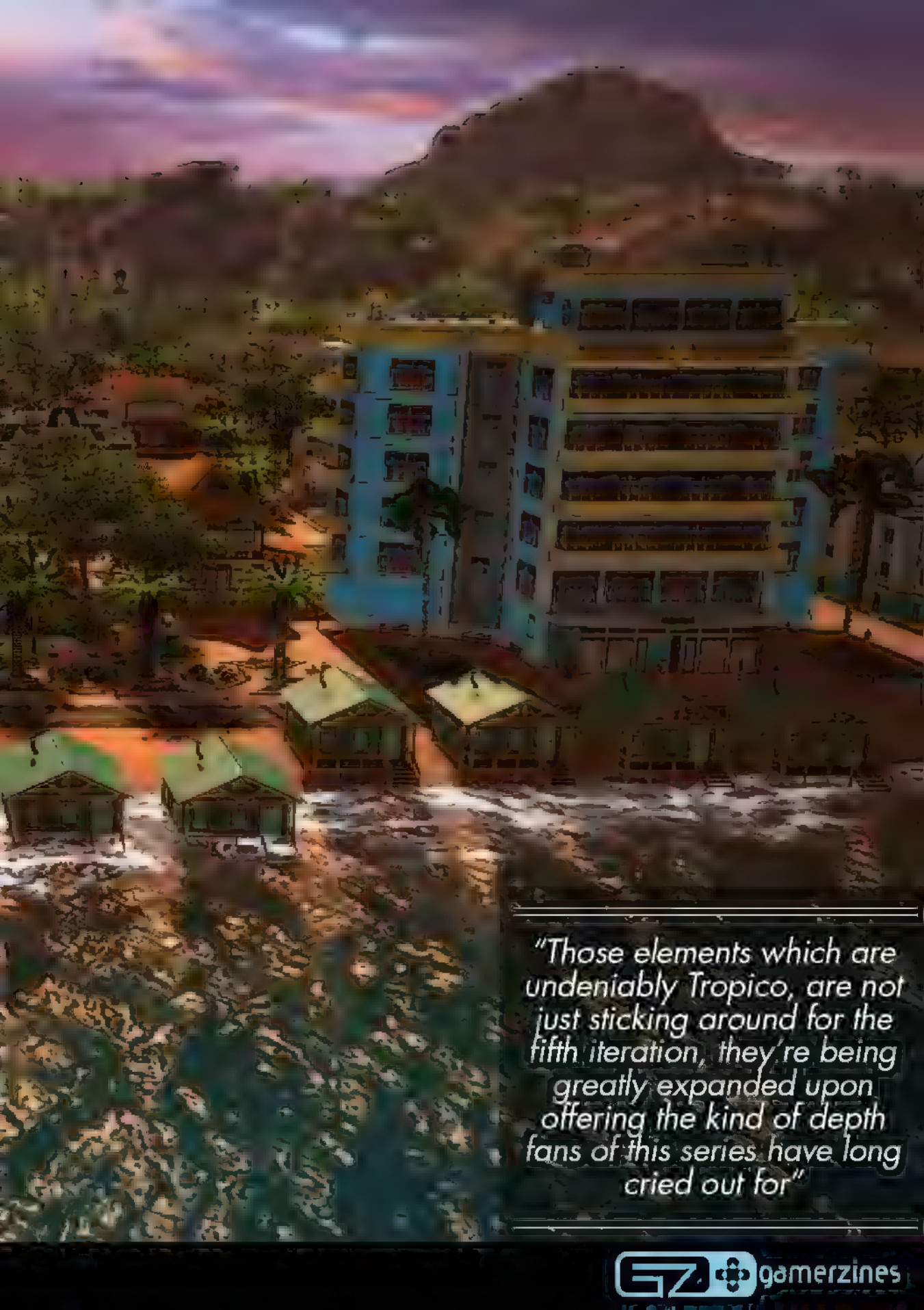
TWEET US @GAMERZINES

A dictatorship that lasts...

Of all the management series out there, *Tropico* has always been the most fun. With its samba soundtrack, tongue-in-cheek 'Be a Dictator' premise and playful commentary on modern politics, Haemimont Games' franchise has always proved as smart as it is silly. Those elements which are undeniably *Tropico* are not just sticking around for the fifth iteration, they're being greatly expanded upon, offering the kind of depth fans of this series have long cried out for.

Structurally the typical *Tropico* experience is now completely different, with the campaign first of all casting players as a governor of the titular Mediterranean province way back in the Colonial Era. Before they accomplish anything, players must build up their economy and win independence from their empirical overloads and thus begin their legacy to dominate the humble island paradise for generations to come. Once independence is achieved players then must pen their nation's founding constitution, choosing between different types of suffrage, forms of governance and just how intertwined religion is with the state. These choices sound rather dry but every choice available has far-reaching consequences, determining support levels within the many factions that make up your electorate. For instance, choose the atheist option in your constitution and you'll get a slight scientific research boost, thus unlocking new buildings faster while angering religious heads, whereas if you place religion at the centre of your government you sacrifice that intellectual perk, simultaneously earning favour from all those that believe in a higher power.

Every decision in *Tropico 5* boasts these kinds of trade-offs which, come election time, can save or banish your rule to the scrapheap. Of course, you can still declare martial law if the 'ousted from power' game over scenario threatens, but even then you may just be making a rod for your own back in later eras. After independence is achieved campaigns cycle through World War Two, Cold War (which was the



"Those elements which are undeniably Tropico, are not just sticking around for the fifth iteration, they're being greatly expanded upon offering the kind of depth fans of this series have long cried out for"

PREVIEW

The look of cities evolve over time outside of player intervention, as past architectural styles are surpassed by modern trends



setting of previous *Tropico* games) modern times and future eras, all of which fundamentally change the simulation, shifting up architectural styles, adding new technology to play around with and shifting up attitudes of all your tropicans – which radically alters the status quo on a regular basis.

Haemimont told us that these changing times force players to evolve their play style regularly, meaning that experienced leaders can no longer just learn the tricks of the sim and then employ them time after time to stay in power. Now they must roll with the punches and transform their city accordingly. The bonus of this



EL PREZ SPEAKS

Choosing your nation's export is a key part of earning revenue and commodity prices also rise and fall in accordance with different eras and events. Still, as a wise man once said, "You can't go wrong with pig farming."



approach is that you can tell when a certain city quadrant prospered merely by paying attention to its visual style, and like with any real urban development, there's now a constant need to readdress a building's worth versus its cost to the public coffers. This was made plain to us when we were shown the cost of maintaining a Civil War fort throughout the ages. In Colonial times this massive structure was a useful defence but after World War Two it offers little value and costs much to maintain. The choice here would be keep the fort going (draining tax resources), bulldoze it (thus freeing up more space for expansion) or make it a tourist attraction adding to your island's value as an attractive holiday destination.

Another new element to juggle during playthroughs is the much more fluid trade system, which now requires players to actively participate in funnelling their resources to power centres around the globe. International powers can still end your regime in a heartbeat if you don't pay

the proper respects by sending in occupation forces, but now there's the additional avenue of commodity trading. With prices rising and falling dynamically over time, effectively simulating a living and breathing worldwide economy.

The rest of *Tropico 5*'s seems mostly the same, including the humorous advisor-based missions, and the ability to click on civilians to learn their fears, motivations and dependents. All the options to rule as harshly or as justly as a player chooses are still here, but there are still a few mysteries left to properly explore: such as how does the game's competitive/co-operative multiplayer work? Have Haemionit finally added a battle system worth a damn? The answers to those questions will have to wait until next month, when we get our hands on the sequel ourselves. ■

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+5
PREVIEW



WARHAMMER 40K: STORM OF VENGEANCE HANDS-ON

Let the platform war commence!



Eutechnyx's first multi-format strategy game has been built from the ground up to accommodate competitive online play across PC, iOS and Android, with players able to roll out as either Space Marine or Ork factions – each with their own set of units, buildings, and resources.

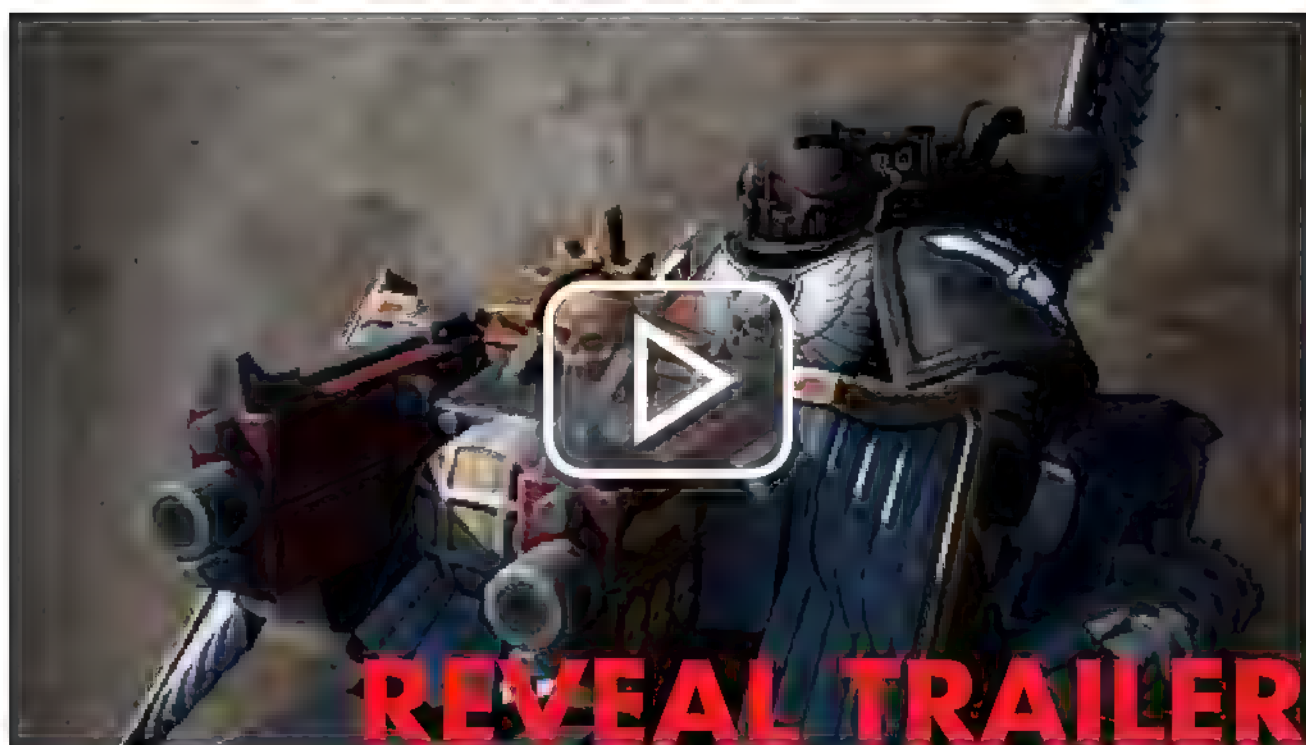
The set up is deceptively simple. Battles take place in arenas divided into five lines, with players having to both defend their side of the map while attacking the enemy's.

Opposing forces intercept one another if they are flung into the same lane, but if fighters are sent into a free lane they can continue

onto the enemy base unimpeded, with the first person to destroy three enemy buildings achieving victory.

While the multiplayer portion of the game is real time, in the single-player campaign battles are turn based affording the action more of a calmer feel. Both Ork and Space Marine campaigns are based on The Purging of Kadillus by celebrated author Gav Thorpe, so expect an extravagant albeit familiar tale.

There are 50 missions per Ork and Space Marine factions, with gameplay split between the aforementioned battlefield and a giant campaign map, so it's safe to say that each campaign isn't just a glorified tutorial.



Control schemes are different between PC, tablet and mobile platforms, with the former utilising mouse and keyboard, while the latter two are unsurprisingly touchscreen-based. However, the interface is full of chunky buttons and big fonts, so the differences between SKUs are minimal at best. To encourage players to fling themselves into the multiplayer side of things, *Storm of Vengeance* also includes a persistent online battle map component which collates and records all battles played

online and funnels the performance of each faction into a constantly redrawn battle map. This map resets every 14 days, but if a player's chosen faction is successful they'll earn medals and buffs which will help them over the next two-week season.

Warhammer 40K: Storm of Vengeance will be released for iOS and Android on Thursday, 27th March, with PC players able to buy into an Early Access version of the game from now. Let the war between tablets, phones and PC commence! ■

FEATURE

HOW TO SAVE...

PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES

GARDEN

WARFARE



PUB: EA
DEV: Popcap
LAST GAME: Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare
PLATFORM: Xbox 360, Xbox One, PC
ETA: TBA

We'll be the first to admit that the title of this feature is a bit provocative, especially seeing as Popcap's first foray into the multiplayer shooter scene has gone down well with both Xbox 360 and Xbox One audiences since it was released last month.

EA undoubtedly made a wise choice releasing this unique competitive experience, a few weekends before *Titanfall*. When Respawn's similarly unique game arrives on the scene however, just how many people will be willing to take their Pea Shooter or health-buffing Scientist out for a murderous spree? We don't suspect too many and that isn't taking into account the impending launch of the PC version of *Plants vs. Zombies*.

Garden Warfare, which won't just have *Titanfall* to contend with but also the similarly colourful *Team Fortress 2*, *Tribes: Ascend* and EA's own *Battlefield Heroes*.

After reading all that you might think that we have some kind of axe to grind when it comes to *Garden Warfare*, but honestly that assumption couldn't be further from the truth. We love Popcap's madcap spin on the third-person shooter, and we believe in its charms more so than any shooter released for several years. The sad thing is though, that this fast-paced competitive experience is still a few tweaks/additions away from becoming a true powerhouse in the multiplayer arena, and in this feature we'll offer up our advice on how Popcap can ensure that the *Garden Warfare* community continues to grow.

GO FREE-TO-PLAY

Especially new Triple-A releases, but in our minds that price for entry still prohibits more people fighting it out on servers the better. On the Xbox One and Xbox 360 the initial purchase price isn't massively prohibitive, as the vast majority of shooters on that platform are all based around a traditional revenue model, but on PC that isn't the case. Against when it finally arrives on PC and that entry price is like a barrier to entry for players.

Unless Popcap adopts a different revenue model, *Garden Warfare* is doomed to failure. One could argue that the base price to sample this release might work in their favour and capture the increasingly loud chorus of



criticism. But the reality is that the game is a free-to-play shooter, and the only way to make money is through DLC. The game is a free-to-play shooter, and the only way to make money is through DLC. The game is a free-to-play shooter, and the only way to make money is through DLC.

ADD MORE MODES

This recommendation has already been addressed by Popcap themselves who have committed to this shooter for the months (and hopefully years) ahead. The first update



is scheduled to launch this month and will bring a number of new maps to play with at the very least. We have our fingers crossed that this new content will be more than that though, as what *Garden Warfare* really needs are new match types. The team deathmatch or entangled Vanquish and the absolutely brilliant *Battlefield: Bad Company* Rush-inspired Gardens & Graveyards represent a good start for this shooter, but we want more match types to play with. How about Capture the Flag or Domination? The first update is a massive statement of intent to how committed Popcap are to this release, so we really hope they've got something good in store.

ALLOW PLAYERS TO BUY CARDS

Garden Warfare's whole character class customisation system is based around buying packs of randomised cards like you would in say *Mass Effect 3*, with points you earn by competing objectives, raking up kills and taking part in matches. This is a good system, but it makes the customisations available to players completely random in a way that feels unfair. For example, a player unlocking their first premium pack could in theory unlock the Cold Pea card for the Pea Shooter class, whereas if somebody else played the game for 20 hours or so and spent all their points, there's still a chance they won't get that specific class specialisation. That's a dumb system in our view and needs to be changed by Popcap giving the option for players to purchase additional packs with real cash rather than just in-game coins. *Team Fortress 2* has an in-game shop, *Counterstrike: Global Offensive* has an in-game shop, hell so does esports favourite *League of Legends* – Popcap you need to add this option into your game as well. You don't have to give players the option to unlock class variants for cash alone, you still have your objective-based system to limit that which requires players to complete tasks before unlocking use of said card, so this wouldn't be pay to win.



THE CRAZIEST SHOOTER AROUND

Electronic Art's digital distribution service Origin still attracts a lot of hate, in the

organise the kind of sales Valve musters during certain points of the year, yet there's still something missing – some kind of vehicle to encourage would-be shoppers to buy a game via Origin rather than competing providers. The kind of thing where, for

of free unique goodies for a different

BOT SUPPORT

**TO READ OUR REVIEW OF *PAVLOV*,
GARDEN WARREN, CLICK HERE**



EVALUATING...

SOUTH PARK

THE STICK OF TRUTH

A South Park game worth celebrating? You bet your ass!



Opsidian Entertainment has produced the best *South Park* game ever, which if you know anything about the history of games based on the series, isn't exactly the shining endorsement it may appear. Between cheap cash-in kart racers, tower defence games and first-person shooters, the *South Park* license hasn't just been pooped on, it's been dragged through stinging nettles backwards, bludgeoned to a pulp and then pooped on.

Up until this point, *South Park* has been one of the best examples of developers and publishers fumbling properties which seem like the perfect fodder for interactive

experiences, only for something to get lost in the translation between the TV and the humble gamepad.

Thankfully this strange curse ends with *Stick of Truth* as this release is a loveletter to everything *South Park*—from rectal probing to casual prepubescent racism and everything in-between. The look and feel of *Stick of Truth* just screams *South Park* from each crude character animation to every lovingly recreated shop in the titular 'quiet, mountain town'.

The reason for this faithful emulation is down to the near-obsessive involvement of *South Park* creators Matt Stone and Trey Parker, as the grubby hands of the American



duo have touched absolutely everything in the game – from major pillars like the plot which involves Kyle, Stan, Kenny, Cartman and their friends taking place in an town-wide fantasy ARG (alternate reality game) to minor throwaway jokes which others games just don't take the time or the effort to emulate. A perfect example of this would be the strange items that often find their way into your inventory while exploring the open-world.

Due to this invaluable input from Stone and Parker, everything in *Stick of Truth* serves the humour of *South Park* first and gameplay a distant second. The classic turn-based JRPG style of battles is simplistic, with the

"Everything in Stick of Truth serves the humour of South Park first and gameplay a distant second"

REVIEW

Despite the potty mouthed source material, there is a childlike innocence to *Stick of Truth's* story, at least at first.

STABLES

player team standing on the left of the screen while the enemy occupies the right. Both parties take turns hitting one another, with extra damage bonuses allocated when a button is pressed at the perfect time (which is when a weapon glows). It's all very *Paper Mario* and combat feels similarly vapid as a result, but then combat and exploration gameplay are really just a means of padding out time between jokes.

In truth, every part of *Stick of Truth's* design has been thought of as a means of accommodating the style, sensibilities and balls-out craziness of *South Park* and it does that job admirably and unashamedly, offering up plenty of laughs along the way. Some jokes portray tropes from the show, like the ability to choose between Thief, Warrior, Mage or Jew in the initial character creator menu, whereas others parody the silliness of

videogame design with collectible audio diaries which exist purely to mock the concept of audio diaries. These playful nods are all very tongue-in-cheek and they never comes across as mean spirited.

"Every part of *Stick of Truth's* design has been thought of as a means of accommodating the style, sensibilities and balls-out craziness of *South Park*"

There are plenty of jokes about unwanted anal insertions, drunken hobos looking for fights and Al Gore thinking way too much of himself, but these moments are carried off with such commitment that you can't help but chuckle at the craziness of it all.

Create Your Character

Select hair style



The character creator offers more choices than you'll know what to do with



Back

Next

There are opportunities to customise your character, try out new weapons and see interactions between different Colorado favourites, via the in-game menu which has been brilliantly designed to resemble Facebook. Also the town of *South Park* is free to be explored at the player's leisure, although the straightforward nature of quests will see you moving back and forth from various locations so the open-world soon goes from a blessing to a bit of a slog as you start wishing the game was a bit more linear, at least structurally. From a plot perspective, there's very little room to deviate from the path Stone and Parker have elaborately laid out.

Environments take place in a 2.5D kind of space in a manner *Streets of Rage* players will be more than familiar with, and puzzles usually involve simplistic interaction like directing an AI party member to a certain object, flinging an arrow at another object.





or combining farts with a naked flame to remove an obstacle. It's all very simple stuff, but honestly that's okay in the context of the game: if anything, *Stick of Truth* just comes across as charming in that regard, offering the kind of solutions an eight-year-old would think of, which seeing as your character and his mates are mostly eight-year-olds seems perfectly apt.

The only issue we had with *The Stick of Truth* was Ubisoft's decision to censor a few scenes specifically in Europe, which the replacement scenes manage to lampoon in their own funny way. We aren't going to weep for the content of these sanitised scenes as honestly we didn't much care for the alien probe sequence anyway, but it is a shame that anything needed to be cut at all. The PC version includes these scenes in full without the jarring written description of events, accompanied

with a picture of Michaelangelo's David facepalming in the background. But of the whole 15-hour experience, these missing scenes represent a tiny portion of the game and honestly aren't the funniest moments anyway. Obviously any kind of artistic

"These missing scenes represent a tiny portion of the game and honestly aren't the funniest moments anyway"

censorship has a tendency to be terrible, but here it almost works as part of the game, and functions as an opportunity for *South Park*'s creators to yet again poke fun at those that just don't get it.

South Park: The Stick of Truth is not only the funniest game we've played

The new kid is exploring South Park.

LT

Home

ver to y

Quests

Map

Collections

RT



Gender
Male
Age
9
LVL
5/50
Relationship Status
Single
Location
South Park, CO
Net Worth
\$10.94

Friends 4


Kenny

Like if you think I am the fairest maiden in all the land.

Scott Malkinson and 14 others like this.



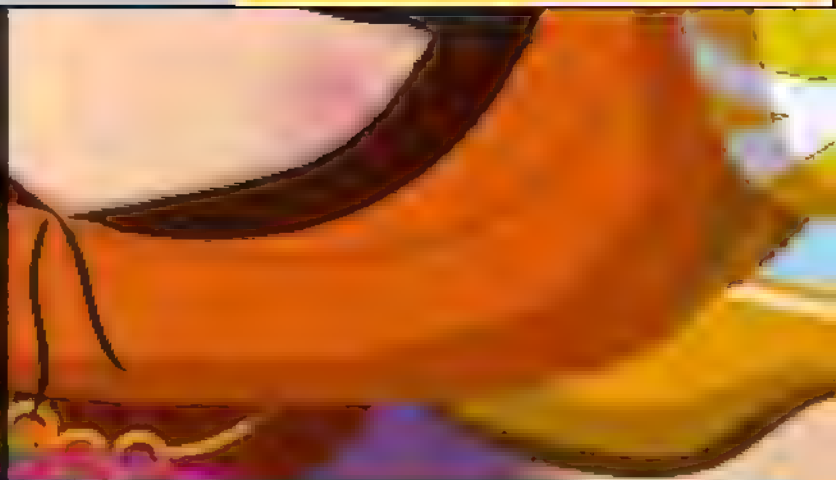
Seriously, Princess Kenny you don't have to keep posting this.


Butters

Hey, everybody! There's a new k.d playing with us, and me and him are friends! That way nobody picks on him.

Periodically, new posts appear on *South Park's* own social network, but there isn't an ability to like posts for some bizarre reason.

in years, but it's also the finest TV/game crossover that's ever existed, taking the best of the show it's based upon and streamlining it into a neat, well-packaged experience with nothing, and we really mean nothing, lost in translation. Bravo Obsidian Entertainment, South Park Digital Studios, Ubisoft and workers formerly belonging to THQ, you've finally broken the *South Park* curse!



DLC & UGC Round-Up

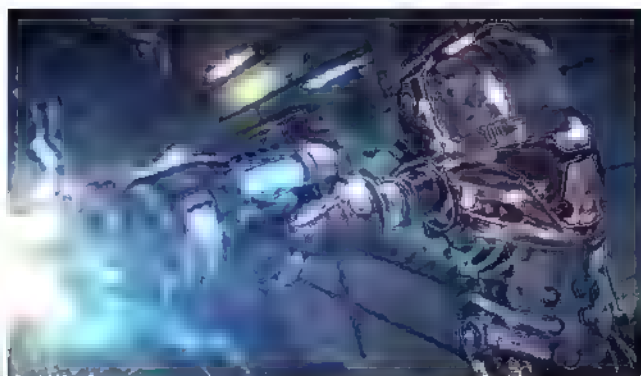
ARKHAM ORIGINS: COLD, COLD HEART

DLC

PUB: WB Games
DEV: Warner Bros. Montreal
TBA: 22nd April

Stay cool guys, WB Montreal wouldn't leave you out in the cold when it comes to *Batman: Arkham Origins* DLC. The pun-tastic Mr Freeze stars in the next piece of content, extending the prequel's already substantial roster of classic DC villains. Fortunately, or unfortunately depending on your love of word-play, this version of Mr Freeze will be based on the comics, rather than Arnold Schwarzenegger's amazingly camp rendition in the tragically brilliant movie *Batman & Robin*, which honestly seems like a missed opportunity

to us. *Cold, Cold Heart* unravels across multiple locations including Wayne Manor, and features Batman's Extreme Environment suit for the first time. Things are about to hot up, figuratively speaking. ■



STATE OF DECAY: LIFELINE

DLC

PUB: Microsoft
DEV: Undead Labs
TBA: TBC

The continued popularity of killing zombies in games shows no signs of abating, but at least developers like

Undead Labs are finding new ways to riff on the concept. The *Lifeline* expansion for *State of Decay* places players in the boots of a well-equipped armed soldier, rather than a scavenging survivor, as part of a rescue force dubbed Greyhound One. Their goal is to head into the fallen city of Danforth to rescue scientists whose research is critical to fighting the outbreak long-term. Players should expect to face lots of life-changing decisions and survivors desperate for aid of any kind. ■



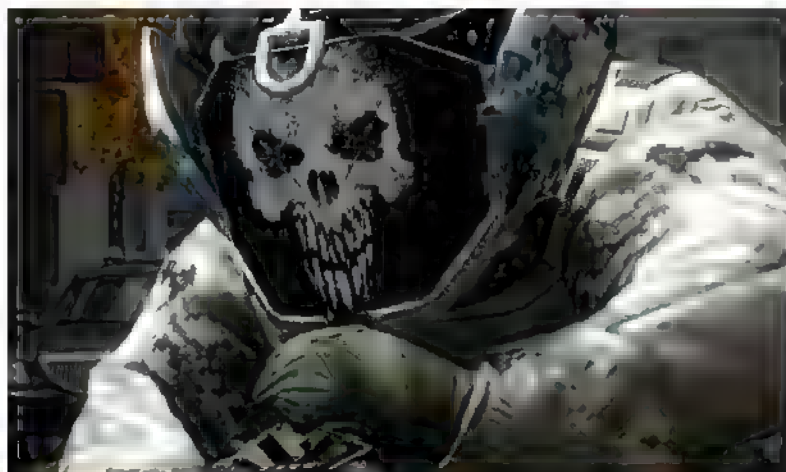
PAYDAY 2: DEATH WISH



PUB: 505 Games
DEV: Overkill Software
OUT NOW

Death Wish is the latest piece of free DLC to hit the PC version of *Payday 2*, offering a new difficulty mode for heists, new ways for the AI Director to transform scenarios and two new enemy classes for players to face: the GENSEC Elite SWAT team and the heavily armoured Elite Bulldozer. This pack will arrive for console versions of *Payday 2* in the near future as well, but the really great news is that due to the game's continued success, Overkill

Software has committed to producing new content for their co-op heist sim for the next 20 months. Happy days. ■



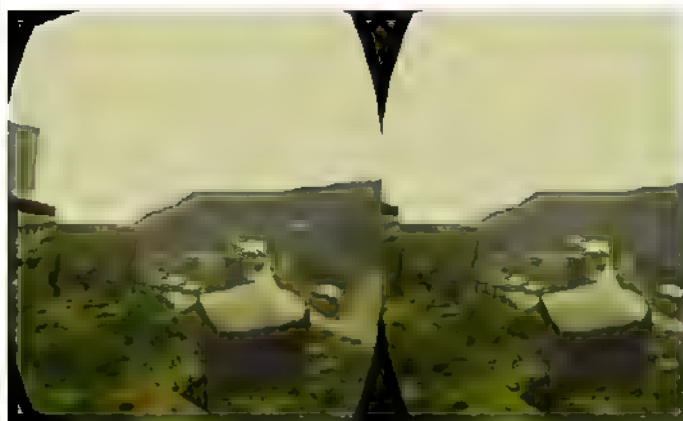
ZELDA: OOT for OCULUS RIFT



DEV: DarkAkuma
FIND IT: <http://tinyurl.com/z22uav>
OUT NOW

Game developers are slowly but surely building content for the celebrated VR headset Oculus Rift, with CCP

announcing the hardware's first exclusive title this month. However, it's taking a while for all this content to ramp up, and ultimately Oculus Rift's impact will be diminished until a retail version capable of 1080p hits store shelves. Thankfully the modding community is filling that gap. A special Oculus Rift demo of *Zelda: Ocarina of Time* showcasing Kokiri Forest got a lot of wannabe adopters excited this month, and its creator 'DarkAkuma' has promised more. Here's hoping Nintendo lets the OR community have their fun. ■



Betas and Early Access

NEXT CAR GAME

EAC

PUB: Bugbear
DEV: mouse
OUT NOW

Smashing cars up while speeding at breakneck pace is something we've always loved doing here at *FirstLook*, just ask our insurers, yet recently the games industry has been shirking its responsibility to fulfil that very specific niche. Enter Bugbear Entertainment who are one of the only developers out there flying the increasingly marginalised *Demolition Derby* flag. *Next Car Game* is essentially the spiritual successor to the *Flatout* series (apart from *Flatout 3* as that game was balls), and features a variety of muscle cars

squaring off against each other on both bowls and twisty-turny circuits. All those interested in trying out Bugbear's destructibility tech can do so for free via the dev's website, otherwise access to *Next Car Game* requires a £19.99 investment. ■



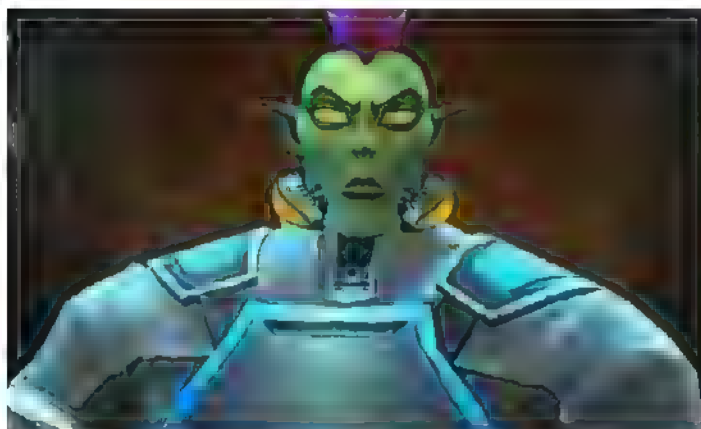
WILDSTAR

BETA

PUB: NCSoft
DEV: Carbine Studios
ETA: Spring/Summer

GamerZines.com hosted its own giveaway of 300 keys for wannabe players to get into *Wildstar's* recent

weekend Beta and unsurprisingly the keys went in a flash of an eye. They dispensed all 300 keys in around 15 minutes which equated to 1 key given out every three seconds! Demand to get into Carbine Studios' debut MMORPG was fierce, but the good news is that more giveaways will take place as *Wildstar's* release nears closer. We've recorded over 10 hours worth of playthrough videos documenting our time with *Wildstar* and frankly we're nowhere near done covering everything this MMORPG has to offer! ■



TROPICO 5

BETA

PUB: Kalypso Media
DEV: Haemimont Games
ETA: Summer 2014

For the first time ever, Kalypso Media's beloved *Tropico* series is incorporating both competitive and co-operative multiplayer. This comedy-filled management series has remained popular for over a decade and the Bulgarian studio behind the series, Haemimont Games, wants to make sure they have all the systems properly in place to allow this unique form of multiplayer to flourish. Players need to register their interest to test *Tropico 5* via Kalypso Media's official forums and fill out a form (see betatest.kalypsomedia.com/TROPICO5). After they've done that they'll

be contacted with details on how to download the client. Not too shabby right? Here's hoping *Tropico 5*'s take on multiplayer city management goes better than *SimCity*'s attempt. ■

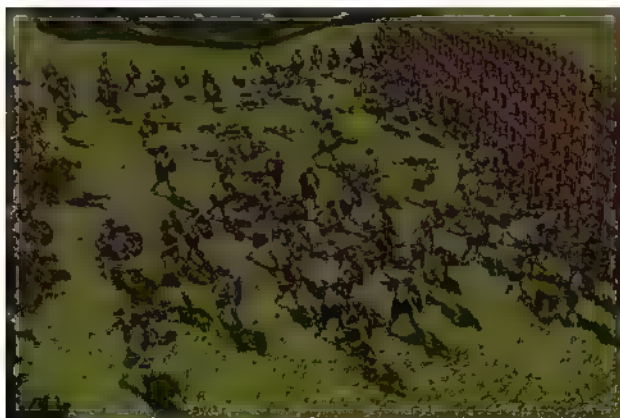


HEGEMONY ROME: RISE OF CAESAR

EAC

PUB: Kalypso Media
DEV: Longbow Games
OUT NOW

Longbow Games has already patched their grand historical strategy game multiple times since it arrived on Steam's



Early Access program last month and the updates are far from done yet. *Hegemony Rome: Rise of Caesar* focuses exclusively on the war between Gaul and the titular faction, with Longbow careful to emulate as many historical details as possible no matter how minor. Additionally the American studio has come up with an ingenious engine which allows gameplay to transition seamlessly between a grand continent-wide map to zoomed-in battles between troops. Think *Total War: Rome 2* only without any immersion-breaking loads between the campaign map and battles. ■

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VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

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- youtube.com/user/GamerZines
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BRITISH TOURING A HISTORY IN GA

Gamerzines' videos are getting more and more ambitious and this is our biggest project yet; a walk through the history of the esteemed British Touring Car Championship purely through its appearances in games. No developer has covered the championship in the kind of depth Codemasters offered in the late nineties, but that doesn't mean the championship is being ignored.

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TITANFALL | Our Early Matches

This month the talk about *Titanfall* enters into overdrive as gamers around the world finally get to play this mech-enhanced multiplayer shooter. We'll be documenting our experience with this shooter extensively, as well as asking the question - is this really the future of the competitive FPS genre?

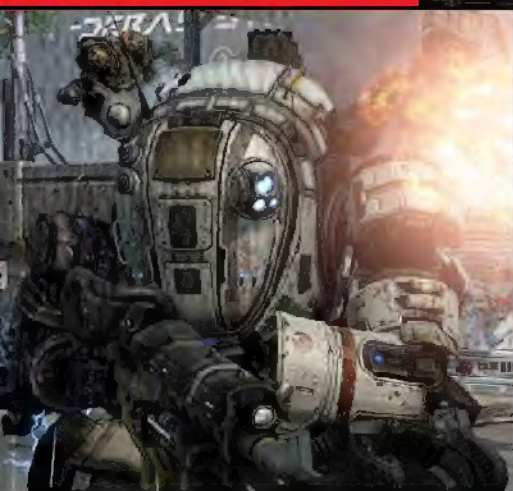


G CARS MES

PUB: VARIOUS
DEV: VARIOUS



PUB: ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEV: RESPAWN
ENTERTAINMENT
OUT NOW



Stealing Everything in THIEF

PUB: SQUARE ENIX
DEV: EIDOS
MONTREAL
OUT NOW

Eidos Montreal's reinvention of *Thief* got harshly criticised when it was released last month and some of it wasn't entirely warranted. Sure, the reboot didn't boast all the gameplay of the original, but that doesn't mean this new breed of stealth-em-up isn't full of its own merits. In this video we examine those strengths and turn the tide of negativity against this mainstream release rightly on its head.



Watching the world go by in WINDBORNE

PUB: HIDDEN PATH
ENTERTAINMENT
DEV: IN-HOUSE
TBA: 2014
(IN EARLY ACCESS)

Procedural generation, where AI not a developer has a hand in game crafting, is on the up in games at the moment and in our minds *Windborne* is the most charming effort in this rapidly growing genre yet. Part adventure, part crafting sim, part exploration game - you need to see *Windborne* to truly grasp what it's all about.



ISSUE 15

NEXT MONTH



MAX DAMAGE RETURNS IN CARMAGEDDON: REINCARNATION



WE GO HANDS-ON WITH SNIPER ELITE 3

FirstLook | NextMonth

**COMING
17TH
APRIL**



FIND OUT IF DIABLO III: REAPER OF SOULS IS WORTH THE ENTRY FEE

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